M: So firstly, let's just tell me when did you come to Canada first?

Da: Okay, so like if you're asking me exactly for vacations or you just want me to just tell you like exactly when I actually moved? So, when I'm came for vacation that was when I was maybe like 10 years old. Okay. was a long time ago. Right now I'm 22. So I'm guessing like the 2010. Yeah. And it's only for vacation. So we just came. So my mom, married. Sorry, my mom met this guy back in 2010. And he was in the in the business kind of thing. She went and met his boyfriend at that time. And then, like, they got a connection. And then they had like, it was like, sorry, my English is so bad. So basically what happened is like, they meet and then they start talking to each other. And then they have a really good deep relationship. So it was like a long distance relationship kind of thing. It was really good. I mean, we love the guy. I mean, he was really good with us. He was cool with her. And he always invited us to Canada. The first time I went to Canada, it was in Alberta, no, sorry, it was Qcebec.

M: So that was he was Canadian. And they went to they met in Mexico?

Da: Yeah. So he went for vacations. And my mom was going for a business trip. Oh, so they met in there and then they had a connection and it was awesome. Then they started like having going deeper in their relationship. And then we started going together. We went to Quebec as a family, my brother, me and my mom and him. And we went to a sister in Quebec, and it was amazing. I love that place. And we always have the opportunity to say like, this is an amazing country. We should live here right? Yeah. We never came across. It was only got like, kind of like a vacation kind of thing right. Then after that, when we came it was in Alberta, again with my mom and then I came with just myself. My brother, I think he stayed in Mexico. And that was in 2000… You're making me think…. long time. I think it was in 2012. We come back to Alberta. We went to Banff. It was beautiful. We stay there for a long time. And then after that, we came... My mom stay there from Mexico. We stay there for a little time. And then they decided to just get married. That was in 2015. So, after three years, they they after the relationship was good and everything. They broke up, I think, for one or two years. And that was like the gap of a few years they broke off and then they came back. And then he decided to say like, hey, like, you know what, let's get married. Bring Dante, bring everything. Let's just go there. And my mom asked me she was like, What do you think? And that was I was 17 by the time. So, it was kind of like a hard decision. Yeah. Like, it wasn't like kind of like, I was so excited. You know, like when they tell you 17 go to the new Canada and new country. And mean it was so good. And I love to, like, I loved this country. Like when I met them here, everything what I did and here in Canada when I was on vacation, I was like, Yes, I wanna live here. So yes, I came in 2015 when I when I moved.

M: So in terms of motivations behind your migration, like did you when you when your mom told you like, think of like, what are your thoughts like, what did you consider in your, in your personal sort of mind like in making that decision to

Da: So one of the main problems was, I guess it was school wise. So because we don't we didn't know what's going to happen, right. I was in in high school at that time in Mexico City. Okay, so I was kind of like finishing in my second year of high school. I wasn't doing that great to be honest with you. Yeah. I wasn't doing great in school. At that time. I was like, mostly partying, you know, in high school, partying, friends going out and everything. So my mom told me like, it's a big decision, you know? She lost her job. So, it was a good thing for her. Like, she, she she lost it. So I'll tell you what was the behind of it. So my mom, she worked for a pharmaceutical for maybe 16 years. A long time. She got a good job and she got to pay. We live really good play with all the time was private schools in Mexico City. We got like a really good life. And my mom, she always worked hard for stuff. She was a lonely parent. And so she was it was really complicated for her right. But at the end of the day, she did it. She brought two kids. So both of us were really. Right now at this time, so I'm like she's proud of us and I'm proud of my mom. Right? And she was the main. She's the still one of my thoughts that she makes me keep going. right. Um, she, after she lost her job, it was so hard for her to actually find another job. So, because of her age, right, in Mexico City is really hard to actually find a job as a woman and as a as your age, right? Like, they don't take you seriously. My mom is an accountant and she has her degree. She was she's a professional worker. And unfortunately, she couldn't find a job. But she find a job good job. Like when she was in the middle of when she broke up with, with Frank, or with his ex-husband. And it was a good job too. And she she loved the job. She She liked it. And she was like, Well, I'm gonna stay here right? When this person actually offer us to go to Canada. It was a big deal too for her. There was a lot of problems. The thing is first, her job, then my school that was one of the important things because I'm 17 right so I have to go with her. It's not like a question on matter to say like, oh, you're staying here in Mexico and then I'll go there. No, it's like a family thing like to bring everything from there right? In Mexico for her was really it was like that's why she asked me because she told me like, well, you're not going to have school. You're going to finish your a year and then I might lose I'm gonna lose my job and here and also the problem was the house. She has a house she owns a house in Mexico, and it's with my my dad. Right? Unfortunately with my dad she always have problems with him. So it's kind of like…it was it was kind of hard and that time I guess. I'll say one of the motivations… that basically what you asked it was…we needed like a clean slate. I think we was an escape, you know. I think my mom was tired of it. She saw an opportunity to live with someone with… her love of life. And to bring me there. I think it was a plus too, right? I mean, I didn't say no, I just, I was so excited about it. I think I saw a great opportunity to be here. I mean, I even invested like, into my research and everything. And I thought, like, you know what, it is a good opportunity, you know what I mean? Like, I could finish school in there. I didn't thought that it was like, kind of like a much of a loss. But now that I think it is, we lost a lot of things… we lost…it's a culture wise. I mean, it was a change of culture. It was a change of people. It was a change, a family, it was change of everything that was surrounded by us, right. And it was just taken away. Right. Like, for me, my perspective was taken away and then just coming through the country, right. So yeah, I think that's that's one of the things that I don't know if I answer your question, but I don't know like

M: And so where's your mom? Now she and she's in Canada?

Da: She's in she she has a permanent residence. but she was she right now she went back to Mexico to fix her legal problems with… with the house with the house. Yeah, just, it's half my dad's and half hers. It is still like kind of a problem in there. I mean, my dad is he doesn't want to see any of us that he doesn't wanna see me, doesn't see my brother, See my mom. So it's kind of like, hard. I mean, I already forgave him so. So I really don't mind.

M: And so the partner that she was with in Canada, is she's still with him?

Da: No, they got divorced.

M: Now in terms of ethnic background, your your ethnicity. background is

Da: where I come from. Mexico, Mexico. 100% Mexican. Pure Mexican. [laughs]

M: And professional background. So let's talk about professional mean, you moved here when you were really young, you still had school to do. So did you what type? Like what how did that sort of that translate into current professional life? What what happened from there?

Da: The thing that I find most interesting in this in this country is that they don't accept anything that is from Mexico. So, so any any background or anything that you have or anything like that, it's just like zero. Like when you come here, it's just you start like again. Yeah, so when I came here to to Edmonton, I thought, like, okay, so I have in my high school, can you accept my two years and say, No, you have to do an exam. And then from that exam, we will put you somewhere. Unfortunately, when I went to high school in that time, I was 18. So I was 17 at that time when we moved in, but then I turned 18 right away, right. So in the laws in there and Edmonton unfortunately when you are a 18, you're not you're not a dependent, right? So the reason why we have to move that fast is because I had to be with my mom when 17. Right? Because otherwise they wouldn't take me. They wouldn't say like, No, he's an adult, he has to make his own application. So for the application, that's the whole reason why they took me when I was 17. Right. After when I was 18 in there, they don't accept any high school students. Thankfully, I don't know how but like my like how the school was in Mexico. It actually like my level. It wasn't that bad. I was like, almost finishing. When I came here, I did my high school, maybe one year. I didn't finish high school. It was an option. The reason why is because I saw an opportunity and I plan it. My plan was to basically to only finish the courses that I need to go to college right? from college, go to university. That was my whole point and my mom agree with it. And even her husband agreed, Right. And he was like, Yeah, that's a great idea. I mean, and I was going to the trades kind of thing. environment. And that's the whole reason why I took that that path, right? unfortunately didn't work. It didn't work as well as I thought but yeah, like I did. I only have I don't have my high school diploma. But I have the like, the knowledge of it, basically. So I have the courses to actually go to college? If I want to go to college right now, I can, because in here the system… they only asked you for something. Like if you have math and English passed… then you can go to college. You don't need to have a high school diploma. Right. You only need a high school diploma if you want to go to university, right. So in my thought it was like, at that time, I was thinking about the price, right? So university’s really expensive. Yeah, right. So I was thinking so I can get college. And then once I go to college, then I can go to I can pay less. Then once it pay less, and then after the year and I become a permanent resident and everything, I will pay less for university. So on time being, I can actually be in college and then go to university. So that was a whole point. So that was the that was my thinking, right? Go to college, pay less. And then after I have my degree or something, I will go to university. It was a good plan at the time. But like, if you're asking me for any professional background, I don’t have any.

M: so you're working in the bank right now. So how did that happen?

Da: So how that happened? So basically, in the bank, they don't ask you for for that. They don't ask you for high school diploma. So and it's about experience and much more about customer service. I think I learned a lot. I have a lot of experience. And that's what actually taught me. I've been working in the customer service …in the industry for a long time. And I think I know how to do it Good. I guess sometimes when I don't know if you heard that before, when people they tell you like, you don't need education for actually be successful. And, and it is true. I mean, it's about how you have a connection with people and how you actually can interact with them. Right. So I learned that and it been helping me for a long time, right. So yeah, and I was actually trying to go to do the school. My thinking is still going to school because I do still want to go to school. Next year, I'm planning to go to school… to university or to college. Well, first to college and and you know, right so, but I'm still debating which where to go right.

M: And what do you want to study?

Da: Like I said, it's it's a really hard decision, because there's a lot of paths in the in the banking industry. They're opening me a lot of doors. They already offer me two jobs. Like as a financial advisor? I just need to do, like a license to sell mutual funds and to talk about mortgages or any ideals kind of thing. So, yeah, like I mean, I do I'm gonna do it in this year.

M: All right, so Okay. I suppose I mean this question. I don't know whether this applies to you really. But like, if, if you can remember or I suppose think about in terms of time, how long did you plan your move, prior move? Was there any planning at that time that went in your patos? Was was that all sort of that taken care of by your mother?

Da: It was actually really fast. It was in a one year period. Because my mom plan it really good with him, okay, and they plan it in a way that we can actually move together as a family. Right. So it was not a big planning on my on my way. I did, I have to do a lot of things right. Like I had to finish a lot of things in Mexico City. I had to finish my degrees in there from high school before I actually leave, my passports I have to do all I have to do all by myself, because my mom was working at the time. So I actually helped my mom to do all those kind of like, paperwork, paperwork. And she was she was she needed the help. So she was so happy about that. Right. I helped her for a lot of things, because most of the things were in English, so I had to translate for her and I did explain her and detail what actually the things they need. Mostly we did them… I think it we would have planned in, we wouldn’t be here if I if I'm honest with you. If we wouldn't make that rush decision, I don't think we would’ve been here. The non-planning worked, I think, I think in in this sense yes. Because if we would have seen maybe like in, in a long term kind of thing, I think we, I would’ve said no. Or my mom would say no too. After all that we have struggled. And after all that we have seen and what we've gone through, I think I would say no. And my mom, the same. I think we would be better in Mexico.

M: You would be better in Mexico, you think this now?

Da: Not like life wise, but we would never go through that stage. I mean, through that period of time. I like, I didn't like that struggle to be honest with you.

M: And what was that struggle if you don't mind?

Da: Yeah. So I'll explain. So I'll tell you the story, basically. So what happened is that he married she married. My mom married this guy. They've been together for maybe six years. Their relationship was good. Everything was amazing. Like we went to trips together. He came to Mexico. We have always good time. We have fun with him, right? I even see him as a dad sometimes, right? Like, I did like him and it hurts me because he's now that I think about it. It's just like, I lost two father figures, right? Like one that I like, my my dad that doesn't recognize me as a son. And then the other one…that I thought, I could have a dad and then it just got taken away, right. So basically what happened is like after a year, we live in there. It was a struggle with him. I guess the reason why I think he lost, he lost his job in Edmonton. So he was living by his pension, and he just got divorced recently, too. And then he lost half of his money right with his ex-wife. So everything was really tight with him, like with kind of money wise. At the beginning it wasn't. At the beginning, everything was perfect. Like maybe the first four, three months. It was really good. I didn't complain when my mom didn't complain or anything. But we thought that we had a future in there with him. We were planning, like planning about all these things… school, I was planning about my school, I was planning for a lot of things. Then it got to a point where money was one of the main problems. So I had to start working. I work as a bartender back in Edmonton. First as a busboy, you know, bussing tables, and my manager loved me. So, all the servers love me too. They love the way I interact with clients. So, they told me Hey, you want to be a bartender? I was like, Yeah, for sure. So, I started being a bartender. I love that job. I love the people that I met in there it was so nice. I I was feel at home. I met some… so good friends in Edmonton and I still talk to them. I mean, I miss them. My best friends I ever had. Then after that, we lost... He was getting into a depression kind of mode. Because he was at home every day. So because he doesn't have job doesn't have nothing to do, right. So he was getting into that mode and he was really, really depressed. It got to a point that like food, like it was the even shorter. Like literally he was basically like, no, like, you can't eat that much. Why you eat that much? Like, you’re wasting money, you're wasting this and it was always a struggle. My mom didn't like that either. My mom she suffer a lot with him I say…just just going back you just reminded me like, How does she like deal with it? Right? So when they married, my mom did everything for love. She… She didn't expect anything back. She didn't do anything. Like, she didn't want anything. Like back she didn't want any money. Nothing right. She even signed a prenup for him. So if anything happens like she would never have it, right, that's how much she loved, right? Unfortunately, like we didn't knew about this…because we trusted him. But he did something like inside that… basically said like, you cannot have anything like, like it was it was really bad, that prenup. So we got into the point that my mom was trying to just suck it up just for me. So, she was thinking like Okay, I'm gonna suck it up for a year and then we can stay here, we get the papers and then we can figure out something out. This is for the permanent residence because we apply as a sponsorship. So he was our sponsor for me and my mom. Yeah. And basically, that's that's what happened, right? So then, it was really, it was really hard like my mom and him they never speak. My mom sometimes had to sleep in floor and had to do some stuff. She was.. she didn't like.. She always… she's she's a happy person, right? So she always go out to, always go out to be like, you know, I'm gonna go out she did. She loved working with kids, so she even volunteered for that. And she'd go out and help kids and everything right? I always go to work, school. I was doing part time, and part time, at the time. And I was really I was doing really good. I was focusing on my studies and I was looking after my work too. I loved it. I was really good in English in Edmonton and I was really surprised. I was like, wow, like, I was like, Wow, really, really good. And that's, for some reason. I was like, wow. In Mexico I was really bad but now in Canada, I'm really good for some reason. What happened? [laughs] you know. But yeah, after that, then he decided to… One month…he was like, kind of, like suspicious kind of away. So he, he was like, basically telling my mom like, threatening her like, you know what, Im gonna cancel the visa, Im going to cancel the papers. We never thought about that. I even told my mom, she would ask me like, can he do it? and I was like, “yes, he can, but I don't think he would. So, one day he comes, and I think ie was like, mostly the economical stress and maybe the depression that he has, because he was looking for a job at that time and he couldn't find it. Like he wanted the same pay and the same things and you would never get something because he didn't have like the diploma. So, like experience unfortunately, doesnt pays you off. That's why I want my papers [laughs]. You know, unfortunately, But yeah, I mean, one day he came in, he just said, so I cancelled the papers. So he didn't even tell us nothing. Apparently, he cancelled it one week before. He was going to the lawyers and he cancelled the whole sponsorship. So he literally went to the thing. And then we've been checked online, we called and they say “yeah, your sponsor just cancelled the application”. So, the case has been closed. So, there's no way that we can help. Because as the rule in Canada once a sponsor cancels, unfortunately, they once they close that file, that’s it. They move to the next one. It is sad. I mean, just like it makes me feel like sometimes they protect more them, their own people than actually us. Right Like as an immigrant…we don't… we didn't came here to do a bad thing. I mean, we were productive. I mean, I was working. My mom was working. My mom…like as a as an accountant, professional accountant, she had to do cleaning floors and everything. Right? We came here we gave everything up from Mexico City just to come here and do all that type of work that we will never came into.. cross our minds, right? So I feel bad about that too for my mom too, because I'm like, all the hard work that you did everything, all the money that you make and everything and it's just for you to start to just working as a cleaning and she was like, I don't care. Like, I'm proud of it. I mean, that's, that's why I love my mom, right like she. Shes just happy. Yeah, so, I mean, and unfortunately, he didn't actually help us out. Because it wasn't like I don't feel like it was like, like he didn't protect us. Like, I feel like in that thing. Canada needs to actually focus on those people too because just by like a snap of a finger, someone just can tell you know, you can go back to your country. So it was 2015. He cancelled the papers in 2016. So, in November. So it was basically because you need two years of sponsorship and then you get the PR. So he cancelled it after a year yeah, so he cancelled…that's what I mean it's just like doesn't make sense to me …like someone… and then like he was even so funny because even actually bought the tickets because he actually like, kicked us out of the house because…he literally, one day he's like here is tickets from Mexico City. I don't want you in my house. You have a month leave. I already bought the tickets. That's it. So yeah, so that's what I mean when they when they ….they don't realize people ….they don't realize… like how easily someone can just ruin someone's life and then just decide.. just not to do it. Right.

M: Once this happened, how did you learn about migration options that were available to you after that?

Da: So we went to a lawyer.Yeah, for sure. We went to a lawyer because we were scared. We didn't know what to do. And my mom, thankfully, she had, she knew a lot of people at that time. So they connected her to them. And she knew a really good lawyer and thanks for her Thank you her! Like, she actually went for it. So, the funny part about that, the lawyer thing of like, the thing that you asked, it is like the system in here is just, it doesn't make sense. Some lawyers, they just give you they just tell you, okay, you can come here, we will charge you this. And they tell you things that …they're not true. They give you misinformation. Most of the lawyers. Thank god this person my mom know her and she was… she knew a lot of cases so my mom she's really careful with that right so she's like okay so because we try others too and they were like, No. And they basically tell us like… no you have to go to your country. You have no options, you have to go. Like you can apply… you don't know English, they are not going to give you an opportunity… Your age is not going to be enough points to actually work for Express Entry. Right? And for me, they told me Yes, he can do it but he has to go to school. He has to start working and once he starts to work after school, then he can apply. And so me and my mom, we decided like you know what, if that happens, then we started saving money. We started saving money for for my school, and then we start saving money for her too in the future, right? Mostly my mom did it for me, for my school because we knew how expensive is going to be the school. Right? And yeah, like, it's just lawyers in here in Canada, they don't actually help you. And that's one of the main problems I think in everywhere in every province and every city, there's one out of 10… that they actually want to actually help you. And they care about what they're doing. Because most of them, they just want….they just want the money, how we're gonna pay them. And then if it gets accepted, that's good. If it doesn't, next. So, I feel bad because I'm one of the lucky ones at least, I got the good advice from a lawyer. And even though like lawyers are so exhausting, like we have to be in the back of them all the time, because they don't do their work. And that's what I told to my mom, you know what, you were paying her money. You need to actually to… Like the word is not claim. Its like demand… You have to demand her to do her job. It's her job but and you're paying for her. Its not like a free service. If its free, okay, I understand. But, they told us… like we never heard about that option.. the humanitarian option. After we explain our story to the lawyer, she was like, you know what, you qualify for doing a humanitarian visa, as a humanitarian basis and you can apply as a PR. She even told us like, it is rare that these cases, that they get accepted. So, it has to be a really hardship… like a really hardship thing that happened to you that they will accept it. Otherwise, they'll not accept it. So we said right. Yeah so that was by the lawyer.

M: In terms of your family's you said it was you your mom and your brother? Was your brother here during all of this?

Da: No, my brother was in Canada before. He was already in Canada. So yeah, he, he he's in a different story… he married. He was in Toronto.

M: And at what point did you move to Toronto?

Da: When he cancelled… when he actually bought the tickets, we actually… that time the time because he gave us like a short time. So we talked to my brother and he offer us to actually live with him. So that was back in 2016. November, December 2016.

M: And apart from your family, like your close family, your brother, your mom. Any other community that you knew here and they did they were they played any role in this as well.

Da: Oh my God. You know, all these communities in here, they're the horrible thing ever [laughs]. They are, I will say in Toronto, they're the laziest person that you will ever met in your life. All community. My mom went to all different type of communities to have some help. And nobody would help her.. like Spanish. Most of them were like Spanish. She asked for legal advice, because she needs to divorce with that guy, right. She asked for legal advice mostly, because she wanted to get the divorce. And even for to ask for the papers and we're doing actually the right thing…the humanitarian basis… they were like No, he's a Canadian, you're an immigrant. You're not gonna get anything, they're not gonna help you out. He has the right. That's basically what we got from a community center where we're supposed to actually help each other. And it makes me mad because he's just they’re people that… they're actually getting paid by the government, that they are not doing their job. They are not actually helping. And it's just, it is unfortunate because I seen it even when I work in the bank. I've been trying to reach this communities to actually help immigrants and me I will myself I want to help them out to do their banking, but they don't.. They just don’t wanna do it. I I really think that community centres, with the government, I think they're stupid, like, I mean, like, I mean, they should not be actually there. I mean, they should not be there. So waste of money. taxpayers money. It is a waste of money. All my friends.. they are immigrants. My friend Kosta, he's from Spain, he went through the same situation, okay. Well, not the same. But he, unfortunately he came when he was 18. So, they didn't give him the papers with his parents. So his parents got Express Entry because they were professionals and everything and they were from the UK. So right away, they get into the permanent residence. But like he was 18, so they didn't give it to him. So unfortunately, no, but we're talking to each other and like, we were mad …we were were even I remember when I was, like, we're even talking about how stupid the system is and how unfortunately for people that like us who actually want to work and want to contribute, and actually not use any of their taxpayer money, which they complain a lot, we actually want to be in this country to work and to do something productive. Unfortunately, they don't give it to us.

M: Now you told me the visa processes and everything. You know what we can pretty much move on to the map. One last question before that. In terms of skilled migrant. I mean, like I said that this research is about being skilled or skilled. How do you consider yourself to be skilled?

Da: so um, I think for the last two years, I learned a lot in the bank. Even though I don't have a paper that says that I'm a skilled worker, I think I am. I'm a personal banking associate. I deal with a lot of thing… I deal with lots of credits, like credit card applications. I deal with a large amount of money too with clients and I think I'm like my boss loves my job like I think I've given them so well that they're happy with. Like I don't get no complaints from any of my bosses so not my boss. He doesn't have no complaints. I have… I have an attitude problem but that's different case. When he doesn't go my way, I get frustrated.. I get like an attitude problem but I think that’s the sassy part of me. So the most proudest thing than I am is for learning languages. So I learned… in a period of one year I learned French so I'm now with speak French and I speak English and Spanish on the level of a local person. And I'm proud of that too, to be honest. Because I learned it by myself. I didn't learn in school, I just learned by myself and I used to speak with my French clients, they love me too. I always talk to them. They're so nice. And also, I think I one of the main things, I think, and it's, I think it's a skill, because I want to be part of the community to help them. I've been trying to reach for a lot of community centres. I've tried to be part of the LGBTQ community, they’re HIV positive too...some people then to help them out for the banking because a lot of refugees that they come in here, they don't know where to go, and they go in there, and then they help them out. So, I try to help them out here, right. So, I'm being trying to be part of these communities. But for some reason they put so many reviewers, so they don't trust you and they think that they want that you want something out of them. And at the end of the day, I'm like, like I told them… I even tell them I don't get nothing from this. I can give my clients based in there, and that's it, right? Like, I don't need you right there. I don't need to do my work. But I do it because I want to be part of the community, I want to help you guys out. Because I think people are really misinformed. And people are not getting what they actually want to and what they need. So I think that's a skill to I think, like, I learned that I don't want people to go through the same situation with me or my mom, where they just tell you what to do what to do, and they don't have the option. Right? Like, I hate that. Like, it pisses me off if someone tells you like, yeah, you have to do this and this and that. And they don't explain you details. For me, that's, that's like, like, that's disrespectful because it's like you're you're someone your person, and you deserve to actually have options and you deserve to actually be to know what's going on. I mean, it's your money and its your things and you have the full right to actually know everything. So, I always do that to my clients and I try to do that for them. So, I'm proud of that.

M: so firstly, let's go through all the visa categories you went through from the first point of arrival to the current status, including any wait times, processing times…

Da: Yeah, I have to think about, all right. I have So many visas in Canada as I wonder.

So I think the first one would be my first visa. So I got my student visa first. student visa. so I got my student visa, student visa and that was seen back in 2015. Okay, okay, as a sponsorship. So when you have a sponsorship. When this is the sponsorship, you can get the visas really fast. I got my student visa the time so even though you're under the sponsorship you needed a student visa is …so basically this is not a visa being sponsorship. When you are being sponsored, they give you those visas in order for you to wait to the way to permanent residency. They give you those visas and then after that, then you can work and study whatever. Yeah, so I got the student visa. And that was me before I got I came here. So it took maybe like 3 months period…Give or take. Yeah, when I came here in 2015 when I moved there. So that was the first visa that when I got here. After a year, I was still in the sponsorship thing. So that was in 2015. I'm just saying I'm just wondering because I started working. So I was in school for a year. Yes, those 2016 So, in the gap of the sponsorship, I was still there. I went for a working visa, work visa. But this one, same, you took three months. Like it's a give or take, I think they given to me a little bit faster, because I was in the sponsorship. So when you're in sponsorship, they give you things way faster. Because you like when they have someone that can get in touch you like to be in the back of it. Then it makes it makes the process faster for some reason I don't know why. This was in 2016. I wanted to work. So I was like, you know, what I'm going to work for that time me until I get the PR. So I was thinking that and they say yes, that's…that's a great idea. After that, they just cancel my papers. So, this was in September. When I go my working visa go to the same time, I think August or September. So I got that in August. So this is when I was in the sponsorship. Then this is the sponsorship. Yeah, after the 2016. So when I was in, in December and December, it came here…December November it was time gap I got so my papers got cancelled. But, by the time that work visa was still valid, so I can still use that working visa, no problem. So even if they cancel your sponsorship, the working visa is still valid. So it wasn't it wasn't a problem after that. So December, once it was cancelled, it was fine. It wasn't a big deal. So then we went to the lawyer. And then she started the humanitarian process. They wanted to put that too. Yeah. So all these. So in that time, because we knew that he cancelled he was in November in December. So because its not a visa, so these things …like the sponsorship and the humanitarian, it's a I don't know how to explain it. It is like a process. But it's not an actual visa and it doesn't give you status. It doesn't give you nothing. It's just like, like, you apply for it. That's it, basically. So because basically, they give you your permanent residence as a humanitarian basis, or they give you your permanent resident as sponsorship, or they give you your permanent residence as a work skill as a skilled worker, or an express entrant. So that's how it works. Then I went to the humanitarian and that was in December 2016. That was when the process got started. Yeah, that's like a timeline. And then after that, I got my work permit until (checks phone) So I have the exact dates. And with the humanitarian, you can remain in the country though. That's what they were explaining us, like, as long as you have your working permit, they cant take you out of the country. If you don't have your working permit, then they will ask to leave right away. So, I have this one. They give you a lot of working permits. They ask you a lot of papers like it's because in that process if you like, do you want to know what actually they asked me? My working permit got expired so I had to apply. So, at that time I was working in the butcher shop. So, this time, during the time I will start working in the warehouse and so at this time, I was working in the butcher shop. And then I was working also in the warehouse. So my work permit was perfect and, and everything and… I was afraid because they might not give me my working permit at that time because any of these jobs are not skilled, right? and if they don't accept the humanitarian basis they don’t give you the working permit. You are making me think a lot of things. Coz in that time I got a letter of acceptance. I was still working the butcher shop, but that's fine. Then in 2017 in August, so when I was here… August 2016, I started working at the bank. So my my boss, actually, like, offered me the job. And then I quit that job. And then I stayed in the butcher shop. And then from this one I went to here and then to the bank. It's actually not that bad. And then when I was in the bank in 2017, I actually asked for a work permit. So, they asked me for a lot of things and then they say yes, so in that time, my working permit expired in August and gave it to me because I apply. So it was started working at the bank and then at that time, I have to apply for my my working permit and my working permit. They gave it to me in like after, like after three months, too. So when we knew about the working permit was accepted. We thought that so the lawyer told like if they accept the working permit, it means that they're going to give you the permanent residence, or it means that your humanitarian processes going in a good direction. So I remember I'm not 100% sure, but I remember that in this period of time in 2017. Because this is 2017. So, this is like in January, like in January, sorry. January to May - And then in this period of time, I remember that we got a letter, a letter that said that they will accept the humanitarian basis and that they will and they will actually like go through the process of it, but that doesn't mean that you're accepted. That's what they tell you. So that's, that's the intention of accepting it. Like, we will review this file as a humanitarian basis. But we don't know if you get approved for the permanent resident or as a humanitarian. So we got the letter of of …I will put it like letter accepting, accepting humanitarian…and then after that, yeah, I think that's most of the visas. Yeah, that's all I got. Yeah, it was a student and work visa and then another work visa and then I got another work visa actually action. Okay, so the work visa, because they gave it to me in 2018 because it expired. It was for only one year. So yeah in 2018 of July, so it expire at that time. So in July 2018 yeah because they give it to me for for one year….apply for work permit and it was three months this one.. and it was an open working permit as well.. that’s important. Because they give you restrictions so this one…. that the one that I had for this work visa [before], it only gives you a certain way you can work into certain in a specific places so you cant work everywhere. It gives you restrictions and their conditions in all of the work. And this one was with conditions. And they were saying that I know you can't work at this, we can all look at that. So I got the July 2018 …for the open and they they gave it to me for for two years. For the two years, when I knew about that, even my lawyer told me like you know what, you are going to get accepted for the permanent residence because that's how long it takes for them to give you your permanent residence. And it's true. So my permanent residence I even got it. They give you a PR card. So my PR – I got it on July 2019. So you see, like, it's, it is a whole… I'm sorry, like its a really bad map.

M: So we'll move on to commercial services that you use, right. So in terms of on your map itself, can you tell me the commercial services, the things that you paid for to get your PR?

Da: So for that one we didn't pay for the my step… my..my mom's ex husband. He paid I don't know how much to be honest with you…for the sponsorship.

Yeah, I have spent a lot of money. Mostly most of it, I would say would be almost like 30,000 for me and my mom. $30,000…that included, that's included the lawyers and I think I would be even more. So sponsorship, you pay for the student visa and my moms working visa. So I'm just gonna put my working visa (mom). Then there is a price as lawyer so…lawyer…that's another expense. What are they actually the charging for that they fix their own fees… I don't know how much you pay ..But like I say I'm pay for lawyers, the student visa and the working visa. So after the sponsorship when I did the humanitarian, we had to give $5,000 just for the application process. So the five thousand dollars he was the application process and that was not guaranteed, right. So it was just to start the process. We had to give the half of it. So one half first. And then the other half when we finish. My mom talked with the lawyers and she said ill pay that. That’s only the lawyers fees .. that’s only for the humanitarian itself, right. So this is only for this kind of thing. But then they charge you for other things, right. They charge you for the working visa for me and my mom, and then they charge you for the translation. So that's all the translation for all the documents like cards, anything that you have any like proof, any school or anything that I think it was least $1,000 coz it was my moms and mine. I'm not gonna give him like exact numbers, but that's what I think it was the estimate. It really expensive, because they charge you by page. The other thing…the government fees…course because it doesn't come included with the government fees just to apply. They charge you just to put your information in so much then they charge you I think like $300 that is actually expensive because you're going to pay for a working visa, but they will charge you to have a right for visa basically. All right. That's for humanitarian.. I think I paid even more even more for that. Because we moved in here, we have to like pay the like the sending of documents. So when we send the documents the government, we also have to pay for that. So, the shipping of documents. So basically the lawyer will make all your file and everything they will stamp they make everything and then you send it to the government. So it's not online. So we have to pay for those because they want actual copies of everything. So we have to pay for those shipping documents and makes it expensive because it's important documents… we don't want to make it lost because Canada post is the worst that you will ever have. I will never use Canada Post in my life. So you have to send it by UPS or FedEx basically. I think it's like 75 bucks just for sending documents. when I was in here….in Toronto….Ill say accepted process. I had to pay for my working permit. I also pay for the shipping because I had to send it to my lawyer. This lawyer was based in Edmonton. There's a process online - Yes, but because this is humanitarian, they have to make the case. So the lawyer makes like a big huge case for you like 20 pages or something like that. And then they explain why you should take care, why are we actually applying. So I did take my medical, medical exams - you have to pay for blood testing and everything. They don't give it to you for free. So, it's blood testing is expensive. Why? I mean, it makes no sense. Then the right right to having this card [PR card]. It was $500. Just to have the right of being a permanent residence, you need to pay 500. They make money. That's why…that's why… I don’t understand because people tell me like “you leave from taxpayers money. Yeah, I wish I could see that money. Where is that money? because I don't I haven't received it yet. What else - fingerprints, prints from Mexico and from here. I have to be that from Mexico and from here so I think for me just to send them to Mexico, it was like hundred. She was like, just to send them and then I have to do the process. It's just too much work that that police think that it was because they want to make sure that they make a background check and everything and then they send it to the country and in the country. They send them to whatever the embassy That's right. So fingerprints, both of them because you have to do it twice…Fingerprints and background check. I think that’s it. I think it's more but I don't remember.

M: We'll move on to the next question. So tell me the role of technology. Did you use technology in your migration journey at all? Did you use any sort of online resources to conduct research on social media?

Da: Yeah, I think that we did but it is horrible. Online, the experience is horrible. Our case for some reason it wouldn't show online so we were like in blind form because they don't tell you anything… like normally they say in the website… they say that you can check even on your phone. They give you two options either you go to through phone channel – it takes hours – or online. The problem with online is that our case for some reason in never like…. never like existed in their system for some reason. I don't know why it was just like, wandering around for some reason. So yeah, somewhere. I mean, I hate that online. And I hate the phone chat. I think they're not... When they get them hold of you. They're really nice. And then they give you really good customer service. I have to admit that, but they don't give you no information. They even tell you like we're not gonna give you any information on the trial, you have to wait until actually respond to you, like we're not gonna give you any information at all. The online it gives you a lot of research. But to be honest with you, it's scary to do it by yourself because you can do it you can do the application yourself. Even the government says you can be yourself like you just pay for it and then that's it. But it is a scary because if you miss something, if you use anything, like you say something wrong, or you don't know what actually that question actually means or anything like that - Denied right away and then they give back. So, is it worth it. Might as well just do it the right way and then just from a lawyer, because I see people and I know people that they have actually done it online. They're working permits, they take it online. And they do it by themselves. Like their permanent residence or their working permit. They do it by themselves. So, it's actually interesting because I was like, well, I should have done it, but I feel like it was safer. I'll say….this one none of them work. I hate them. I hate I just hate him like, this is so hard. So the CIC website - that's one of the main pages and it tells you everything… it gives you. Like, just like, it doesn't give you like an explanation of why you have to do this. I mean, it tells you the time and everything. But it tell them in their own way. Okay, you have to wait this period, this time. But its like, Hey, can I know more? Like what do I have to do with that time? do I have to do anything else or what? So this was like no. My mom did did Facebook. There's like a community for latinos. They they talk about it or something like that. We didn't went through that. I don't think there's that much like online resources.

M: Tell me about your thoughts on immigration policies on current…Are you kind of on top of it? Do you keep a check on what what immigration is doing?

Da: Unfortunately I dont agree with any of the immigration policies that they have in this country or any where. So it might sound really bad but I think they're not fair…. they're not fair with how they select people and then how they accept people and unfortunately like we live in the world like a lot of people they have to leave their country not because of that’s what they want but because they don’t have another choice because their home it's been bombed or their home is being ….they're being threatened…. their kids are being threatened. And I understand that. I completely understand that. I mean, I think…I think that…for instance, I do not agree about the refugee stand for the Syria. Okay so the reason why is because the way they treat other people way better than us.. the actual immigrants, right? Basically, what the government is trying to make me understand is like so if youre actually having all this trouble and everything will give you everything. They give him the housing, they give them clothes, they give them all these resources to help them out to go through this life in Canada. Whereas the other parts ….where ‘us’ when I go into this category – Its like “no we don’t care, you need to pay and you have to figure out a way”. So, like in my my case, and a lot of people that I know… it's just not… I don't have nothing against their country or anything. It's everything like that…they can have everything so easy in the silver plate, but they don't realize how fortunate they are. is not the fact I understand completely. It's not a fact, I completely agree. They should actually give more help to them. And we should support. It doesn't make sense that you're helping all these other people and then just forget about the people that actually are contributing to your economy and are giving you money for that and we're not using any taxpayers money, or any we're not using any money or resources from any of the government. And at the end of the day, they really treat us like, like, “Okay, thank you. Thank you for coming”, you know. I even even see skilled workers, all the things that they have to go through, all the money that they have to pay. My friends, I’ve seen them - the scare of actually going back to your country because you don't actually perform in this country because they will you know, they see no, you can stay here because you don't qualify for it. I'm like, I'm thinking to myself like it is… like, how I'm not qualifying for it?, Like explain to me, how im not ‘qualifying’ for having to live in this country? I pay my taxes. I've been here for a long time and being a contributor for this society. I think and being part of here. I mean, it's not fair that you give priority to other people, just because your government and the choice of the people decided to do that. This is not even their fault. I'm not saying it's their fault. There's nothing to do with that. I mean, a lot of people they might thim im really.. a lot of people might not like my way of viewing things but its just like…its not fair to the person that he has worked so hard and then people like that the people like this… they going through that situation as a refugee, they don't appreciate what they really have. Sometimes its stupid… sometimes people like, they think they deserve everything in a way that and they show it to us like no I just. I'm not gonna work. I already have this. I have that… and I'm like that must be nice. I mean, like the refugees… they got greeted by the Prime Minister,they gave them clothes and everything - I didn't get anything. I didn't get any clothes. I have to buy my own. I didn't get any money. I have to actually pay taxes. I didn't receive any money back. I earned a lot of money for the government, just because I was working two jobs. Which makes no sense. I was like, in makes really no sense. Like how the government is actually doing this. Like, so what are you saying? Like, okay, so you have to work so hard to be in this country. You need to pay your lawyer. You need to pay your housing. Rent is not cheap here. You need to pay for your food. You need to pay for your normal expenses. And if it's something left to have a little bit treat for yourself, then you can have it. But then you see other people that they use the system. And I’ve seen it for long and I'm not saying it's only Syrian people. A lot of South American people do the same thing. And it's just so frustrating and its so, so like, like, it's just it makes me so mad. Because it's like, you have no idea what you have. Like they're giving you the opportunity, take it. Not everyone gets that opportunity. And that's what a lot of people don't understand. You know how many people actually want to be in a place where people are actually suffering back in their own back in their country, who are actually having a struggle. And then they come here, and they don't do anything. That makes me mad, because, at least at least in here, and what I have to say for myself is like, this space haven't been, it wasn't easy. At least I'm proud to say like, you know what, I'm a Mexican. And I came here to actually do something with my life and I actually work and I contribute to the economy. I am proud to be in this community and whoever told the opposite, that would be like no.. I do the same things as you. Because I see it with my partner. He's Canadian. So he has that conservative mentality that immigrants take everything. Well, my ex partner… we just recently broke up. It's just because most of the people they say the same things. The same old comments that immigrants are taking their jobs or taking their, their opportunities, they're taking their money. And I'm like thinking like, No, that's not true. Like, the only reason why I had the job in the bank because Canadians don’t want that job. I mean that job is there.. I mean, we're the same.. I don't have enough experience. What is the difference between me and other Canadian? We have the same thing.

M: I mean, that that makes me want to ask you another question now, in terms of romantic relationships and did your visa ever play a role or your status in this country playing a role towards towards having a romantic relationship or a partner? Or did that sort of ever come into between something? The discussion of your papers?

Da: So I did have a boyfriend back in Mexico, I did had to break up with him. I did lost a lot of things. I literally lost my lost friendships, I lost my home, I lost my family. I lost a lot of things to just to come to this country, to work hard and do a lot of these things. I think, I found this opportunity that you gave me to actually tell my story and I'm thankful for that. Because its just sometimes people the people they just need to know. I think sometimes …people they just live in a mind state that nothing is happening…

M: So next steps?

Da: So yeah, so what they told me is after the three years havto e a permanent residence and then they’ll give you citizenship. Apparently right now they change the rule, I think for the elections. They say that now, whatever years you've been here, because I've been here for four years, so those years count as one. So now just need only two years for citizenship. Which makes no sense. So I mean, like, I've been here four years in this country, you can't give me my citizenship right now? So there's a there's a test. Its like history most likely. They make you sing the national anthem and I think you have to pay for it too. I think it's another $500.

M: Would you consider migrating anywhere else?

Da: I will go somewhere in Europe. I will not stay here. I mean, after what I've gone through, I mean, this is just sad. Sometimes. You know what I mean? I mean, I love this country. Don't get me wrong. I think it's a great opportunity. And actually, they deserve to be here, and they actually want to have people there. Because it's not… like I like I keep saying it's not fair. And they give opportunity to other people that they should not be here. For instance, they should not take everyone.. you know what I mean? I think it and it's not about their background is not about their religion, it's not about anything. It's like they if you don't want to be part of this community are you doing here? If you don't want to get used to this culture, you don't want to be part of this culture. What are you doing here because culture is one of the main things and one of the main things that my mom and her ex-husband told me is like, you’re coming here, you change your culture. You're not Mexican, you're not. You're a Canadian. You're not celebrating any Mexican culture. You're not going to celebrate anything like that because you're in Canada. You're not in Mexico. And you know what? I agree. I say, You know what - you're right. If you come to my country, I will say the same thing, because you're in my country, you come here. And of course, I don't wanna, if im in Mexico, I don’t wanna celebrate Canadian holidays, right? It makes sense. I was like, Yeah, but unfortunately, a lot of people they don't like… they don't get that. They want to change the culture here. Which I don't agree with it because it's not.. Like why am I making this culture to change? What am I giving to this culture to telling you know why you need to celebrate my Mexican holidays? But just because of politically being correct, they have to do all these things. Right.

M: so where in Europe would you go?

Da: I would go to France. My dream was to be in Spain but Spain is not doing great right now. I mean, right now I'm going to my permanent residence. I do want to do something different. I keep telling my mom the same thing and she told me just get your citizenship and go because it's easier. Right?. I want to at least a place to say that is home.

M: What do you think about your map? And is there anything else you want to add in there?

Da: So here.. the humanitarian process. I just want to tell you what they actually asked. So, they asked you for letters from Canadian people for comments. This opened my eyes for some people. A lot of people they helped me with this and it's people that they're my clients people that they’re still my clients. I think I got maybe…. they don't give you an estimate of how much you need to help…. but the lawyer says that the many you get the better right because them…. for the government it says like you were part of the community and then they know you. They know you. And I got so many beautiful letters from people that I just met …just one day and I asked for a letter and they say yes, like So nice people like I mean, and they're all from here, from Cabbagetown. I mean, a lot of people they say they say, it might sound stupid, maybe because it's just a letter. But it just opens your eyes. Right? Like, I mean, I'll show you one it's, it's, it's just beautiful. How people are. I just love… I love that's the whole reason why I love customer service because this is it gives you a better understanding of people. Right? So this is one of my my clients from the butcher shop. I just talked to… She's so nice, and she gave me this amazing letter. And it's just beautiful. How actually people express about you just by knowing you for a little while. I love it. I have more. They did handwritten letters too. It's just beautiful. How many people they actually open their, their way and they see something because that's what they told me is like, you know what, I see something for me, and then I see that you are going to be great in this country and then you deserve to be in this country. I'm like, thank you. So they asked you for banking statements. So for the humanitarian base, they asked me for the all your banking statements so basically all your banking history….you have you had a credit card, and your personal banking because you need to prove how you been paid. How you pay your credit cards. How many loans you have, taxes – that’s the most important thing. How do you pay your taxes? and it has to be every year so every year, But I will put you in there like this is the most important thing for me was the letters. Yeah, letters, I think. I think it opens the eyes. It makes the officer making the application makes understanding of who you are, right. I got letters from restaurants or letters from people, we got letters from from …from my My brother's bosses. I go letters from my bosses and hearing the bank to say yes for sure I'll write a letter for you. I don't mind. Its so nice right? I can't I just can't believe I went through that was just like it is it is a hard process. Like sometimes I like I told you right in the beginning, like I feel like if I would have stayed in Mexico, like I told you, if I would have known all of this, I wouldn’t have come. I'm not gonna say this. I think it's like all the experience that I have in here and made me learn a lot of things. I think I'm more mature and a lot of things. I got a good job. I got a lot of people that help me support me and then being together with me how I got closer with my family even closer with my mom and closer with my brother. It feels great. I mean, I don't think I would have done this things in Mexico. I think it would have been different. I would have been in school right now. I think I would have done just the same just because I wanted to Mexico. When I was talking with my friends in Mexico, what have they done and everything. And theyre still in University, right, they starting and everything I'm like, I would love to actually be in there. You know, I wouldn't love to just feel that. I feel like when I came here in this country, make me to Miss A lot of things like school .. who doesn't want to go to university? Who doesn't want to interact with people your age, to have the same thinking to actually, like express different ideas with each other? Right? So I think I missed that I miss and I would have loved to have that opportunity to actually interact with people who are my around my age. And it's hard You know what I mean? When you see it when you see people that they go to universities, like, when I go to university, I'm gonna be old, people are gonna be younger.

M: Is there anything else you want to say or add or otherwise I'll just stop it.

Da: I hope I help in something. I think, for me actually saying yes for this. I wanted to my story to actually be heard. And to let like, I hope this actually helps in some way. So I mean, it might not, but if we will, that would be great.