

Station 7:

OK: Maria Trejo / Honduras Language: Spanish *Maria tells the story of her brother's death, and joining the military to avenge him.*

I came from Honduras, fleeing, fleeing my home because I had nowhere to go, it is assumed that (home is) where you feel safe, at home, (but when) you do not have it... then during that time my idea is well the American dream that everyone refers to, right? But no, well, they did catch me in Piedras Negras and they return me to Mexico; from Mexico I left, I returned to Honduras and I remember that my family was there, my siblings, and one brother, I had a brother, we were extremely close.

Look, I told him: " Tomorrow, I'm going and ask for requirements to join the Navy and we do something, right?" and well, he was not sure but told me "OK fine, go tomorrow". And I went the next day to ask for requirements and everything, but when I came back, they told me "Onelia, they killed your brother". "No, not him, they could not have killed him, who, why?"

From there I entered the army with a single thought: it was to kill whoever had killed my brother. It was my only thought, I thought nothing else, the thing was that yes, I trained hard, I practiced everything, I learned to arm and disarm weapons blindfolded. Then when I was out there and I could go out every weekend, I began to enquire and according to the forensics the death of my brother had to have been (at the hands of) his friends because the crime scene is here and in this distance they found three ropes and the three were my brother's and my brother did not lend his things unless it was someone he knew and from there I followed someone with a knife. I followed him, I had him like this, when I heard that someone was preaching then I said: "I can't, I can't do it", but what good can you learn from (this) when the colony in which we lived the saying is: "Anyone who wants, can enter, but only the one who is capable, leaves ".

Bflo: Mohammed Syria / Language: Arabic

One day, I received a phone call and they told me "Would you like to travel to the United States of America?" I told them "Sure, I have no problem." I told them in the moment of excitement and happiness "I would even go to Israel". They said ok, wait for a phone call.

It was in fact a fast program; within two months, I was done with the interviews and I was ready to travel. I actually received a phone call to travel, but somehow they forgot the travel date they set for me. However, four days later they called me and said they will have to run a security background check, and to wait for a call for a new travel date. At that time I had already given up the house, and I didn't have anything else, like furniture. I was not sure of anything. Those four days turned into one more year of waiting. After one year exactly, I was in America with my family.

Of course life here is completely different. Different than my home country and the Middle East. Now we are in a very stable situation and do not need anything, thank Allah, we do not need anything. The only obstacle we are facing is the language; other than that we have a very stable life.

Our life in general is good, the kids are happy at their schools; but there are different cultural aspects here, than what we're used to in the Middle East. It's a more open and free society, not like the Middle East, and this is one of the concerns we have. Other than that everything is fine and there's no other problems. We like it here, and I'm thinking about starting a business here, hopefully, but I need to learn the language first.

OK: Victoria Stonozhenko / Ukraine

I love my dear Ukraine very much! I loved my life, my family and my home. For me, there is one place in which I feel comfort, peace, love - and it is my apartment. The most important thing for me is the atmosphere in which we lived.

Shortly before the full-scale invasion, we bought our apartment, pasted the wallpaper, and did the repairs ourselves. At home it became even brighter, even cozier. I loved everything there, every meter of our home. There is a forest near our house. I loved walking there with my husband.

After hard days, each of us hurried home to relax, rest, change into comfortable clothes and soft slippers. At home, there is always coziness that we create ourselves.

I love the smell of flowers, the beauty of our green trees, I love the sounds of nature. I like to watch when it is raining outside the window and we are all at home. I enjoyed the morning rays of the sun that shine through the windows, I loved how the door creaks in the corridor, I loved listening to the ticking of the big clock on the wall. All the sounds and smells in our house are very dear to me.

We had everything - our home, a favorite job, a happy life, and it seemed to us that everything was going as planned, but all plans were destroyed by this terrible, hateful and cursed war. As I say this, my heart sinks with pain

Bflo: Hser Htee Paw / Burma Language: Karen Hser Sings her favorite Christian Hymn in her native language:

Praise the Lord, Everybody

Praise the Lord

Because He loves us,

He keeps His promises

Hallelujah,

Hallelujah,

Hallelujah,

Hallelujah,

Hallelujah

Bflo: Oscar (Husband of Yajaira) Colombia / Spanish

When I interviewed Oscar and his wife Yajaira in Buffalo in 2019, they were in the process of establishing their status as asylum seekers.

I met my wife while on duty with the military. I met her while I was on leave. We went out for quite a while; we were boyfriend/girlfriend for about two years. While at work it was clearly difficult to maintain a relationship, because I would get deployed. And then I would return after six or seven months, but she really knew how to keep it together and understand my type of work. After two or three years we got married. We've been married now for 18 years. The people who lived in my household back in Columbia were myself, my wife, and my children. We didn't share the household with any other family.

My family came with me (to the United States), everybody together. We came together, and I brought them with me because of the threats. So we came to protect our lives, we moved to Buffalo. It's been six months now, we arrived in April and have been here since.

Yajaira (Wife of Oscar) **Colombia** / **Language: Spanish** *When I interviewed Yajaira and her husband Oscar, they were in the process of establishing their status as asylum seekers.*

I miss my mom, back home. We told everything to each other and we were very intimate and I miss that. My siblings, I miss them a lot as well, it always feels hard to not be able to go back, and it's also hard to leave everything behind without ever knowing when you can come back home. But, I feel safe here and Colombia is...no matter what happens, you never forget the good part of home. And I'm proud of the Colombia I remember. And I feel happy and safe because God gave me the opportunity to be born in that country.

My dad passed away, and I couldn't go back to see him one last time because I was in a city really far away, and I had just given birth and we were already going through some really hard times. It was painful and it broke my spirit to not be able to see him when he passed away. But deep in my heart, I know that he understood and he will understand that it wasn't that I didn't want to go, it was that I couldn't. And the last thing I miss...it is my brothers and sisters. It is one of the things I miss the most of my family.