

Service Learning Transcription  
Max and Katie

Lola Interview

K: If you could tell us your name, your age, a little bit about what part of Brazil your family is from?

L: My name is Lola Tiller, I'm 22 years old today, and my mom is from Brazil, from Rio de Janeiro.

M: Wait you're 22 today? Parabéns.

L: Obrigada

K: How would you describe Rio and the area that your family is from?

L: So my family is from across the bridge of Rio it's actually a, well, it's the second biggest city in the state of Rio and it's called Niteroi and how would I describe it? It's...the reason I love and would want to raise my children in a town like Niteroi is because it's Metropolitan, it's a city, so there's a big downtown, you know, shops, commerce, nightlife, culture. But at the same time, it's in the middle of nature, there's nature all around you. There's the beach, the forest...It kind of reminds me of New Orleans. It's just a perfect mix of the best of both worlds. How do you want me to describe it?

M: Well, that way was cool. It sounds really nice.

L: It's also I guess very like the rest of Brazil in the sense that there's rich and poor division that's really clear. It's just like Rio in the sense that you see the typical shanty towns on the mountain and the more affluent area on the bottom. And touching side by side. We used to live in one of these high rises and in the back there's a huge nature with a play ground and the forest, and just right there is a shanty town in the back and you can here the gunshots sometimes. Yea, I've never experienced pickpocketing or violent crime there but it's happened to everyone else in my family. One day when I lived in Canada I was watching the Brazilian news and in Niteroi there was a shooting of a young boy in the area. The next day my mom calls me and is like I have some sad news...Joao...rest in peace. I hope I answered your question, sorry I'm trailing off....

K: No you can trail off as much as you want to. But so do you envision yourself moving back there?

L: Umm. Well just for background I would go, ever since I was growing up, usually once a year when I was younger for Christmas and then in my teens for the whole summer. So I went back frequently. I have lots of friends there and family, so I'd consider myself Brazilian if only for that fact. Just because it's something I've really experienced and it's part of the person I am. I've always had this dream of maybe one day living there because it's so good in so many ways, especially the people, that's what I like the most. But it's also so difficult, the luxury is really...basic. Things we kind of take for granted here, they're just so basic that it's hard to list them off from the top of your head. Just things like going to a bank and it being simple and easy and taking five minutes or going to the supermarket and being able to buy all these groceries for a hundred bucks. So many things in your day to day life that just aren't easy there that make me kind of hesitant. But it's something that I want to do and probably will at least try out and hopefully it will work. And I've always said I wanted to marry a Brazilian man.

M: Have you been living in the United States your entire life?

L: Well yea, so I was born in San Francisco in California and I've grown up there. I moved for college to Montreal for three years. My dad is French, my mom's Brazilian and growing up I got to experience both of those because I'd go back a lot even without my parents. Instead of sending me to summer camp it was cheaper for them to just ship me off to my families there. It was a blessing for sure.

K: How would you characterize the family you have living in Brazil as compared with your family still living in California?

L: Well the one thing, and this is part of the reason I go back, that I miss and crave is you're so connected there, family life, you're just so connected. Unlike in America, you don't really move cities for work, career, even for school. Unless you're from a small town, but even then really you usually stay kind of in the same city or at least the region you're parents are from and that you were born in. That's kind of changing now maybe with the new generation maybe, but still all my friends...you see your whole family, all the time, cousins, everyone, big families. You usually have at least two kids but you know often maybe three or four, so you have all these cousins all this extended family, your grandparents. So you know, everyone is always together on Sundays, on Sundays you always go to your grandparents' house and have churrasco. So I miss that. Here, I'm an only child, I have my two parents. So I can't...it's different. I can't even compare it because I feel like I don't even have the same thing an American person would with their two parents or family in America. But a big thing is definitely here you see more your grandparents living in one city and your parents moved and you're probably thinking of living somewhere else...more intergenerational displacement that's a lot more common and in Brazil you don't see that.

K: Do you think your mother tries to compensate for that in any kind of way with a Brazilian community in California or is she okay with it?

L: I think she is and that sets her apart from a lot of Brazilian immigrants in the US, I mean if I compare our situation to my American-Brazilian friends whose parents are from Brazil or who, like me, grew up here, you see that they're usually living outside of SF in places where there's a bigger Brazilian community and they're more connected. But I mean yea actually my mom has a lot of Brazilian friends, my godparents are Brazilian...I definitely have the people I spend Thanksgiving with and Christmas are Brazilian...It's informal though, it's not formal Brazilian meet-ups. I'm not sure how they met, that's something I've never experienced, never been to any kind of Brazilian community gathering.

K: Do you feel that your mom has really maintained her Brazilian identity and fostered that in you?

L: In a way, yea, I think she is definitely Brazilian and definitely has passed that on to me and she tries very hard to. Um she is also kind of...well the reason she left Brazil is in some ways that the culture, or the mainstream culture, just doesn't suit her. I don't know if that makes sense but she's taught me a lot of "Brazilian-ness" but a lot of the things she doesn't like about Brazil...that has molded me though...I don't know if that makes any sense...

M: What kind of things that she doesn't like about Brazil, like what's an example?

L: Um okay so...I see it like this too a lot just from going to Brazil but not being 100 percent Brazilian really...Brazilians for all of their amazing qualities that I adore. Well they're very, mmm, class conscious and materialistic in a lot of ways. As much as you hear, I mean I studied Brazilian anthropology when I went to college and all this stuff about it being 'No classes' and 'melting pot,' I personally feel that's total bullshit. I mean to some degree that's true, but to some degree you can argue that's true anywhere, and I see that it's really not the case. Hm what else.

Well it's really a lot about appearances there and you know that matters. You go to the supermarket and you're dressed up. When I would walk around in sweats and flip flops it was a big deal, you know 'You're going to the mall in flip flops! We're not letting you leave the house!' Stuff like that. Little things, you know. If I think of it I'll mention it again.

K: Do you want to talk a little bit about how you maintain Brazilian identity on a personal level, in English or in Portuguese?

L: Yea let me think for a second...Um. It's something that I don't even...I mean you just do it without forcing yourself, I just genuinely enjoy Brazilian music so that's something I keep up with. I go to Brazil a lot so that helps, when I get there I see things I like, be it music or movies or soap operas, fashion, books. It's just something....well reality tv. They just started doing reality tv so I'm watching a lot of reality tv. It's just something that I inherently enjoy doing so in that way it's part of me so it becomes part of my identity. Ahhh umm food. It's just stuff you grew up with so it's normal to keep catching up with it. I don't...I try to make a conscious effort to watch Brazilian news or try to read more in Portuguese because I don't enough. My writing isn't as good as it could be. When I meet Brazilian people I love, especially if they are from Rio, to have a little conversation. I'm always in touch with friends and family from there, so it just is.

K: Awesome. Max, any more?

M: I liked that. What's your favorite soap opera?

L: My favorite soap opera of all time is *Laços de Família* with Deborah Secco, my favorite actress and I highly recommend it. Manoel Carlos is the best soap opera writer. [laughs a lot].

K: Wonderful. Thank you.

M: Yea, thanks that was great.