

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

A Better Life: Fatima, a Brazilian immigrant to the US, longs for the warmth of home.

TONY KAHN:

Hi, I'm Tony Kahn, producer and director of *Morning Stories* on WGBH – Public radio's first podcast! Today's story is from a young Brazilian wife and mother named Fatima, an amazing woman – amazing. It's called *A Better Life*.

[Music]

FATIMA:

When I was seven years old, my mom was killed. And I saw it. I never met my father. And so after that, my relatives take care of me, but not like a daughter. But as a servant girl. That's why I know how to clean. [Laughs] But something inside of me always tell me to go on, never give up. When I was eighteen years old, I get married, and we have our children. And when they start to grow, I was like – "Oh my God, what can I give to them, living here in Brazil? They are going to be just like me! They're not going to get a good education, to help people and have the opportunity to move on in the world." That's when we decide to, to come to America.

When we arrived here, we work really hard. Really, really really hard! My husband helps me clean house. He deliver papers, and he works delivering pizza. But, we are illegal. If you are illegal, you are not able to drive. You can't have a job, but you can spend money. [Laughs] And there aren't any door open. I feel invisible to the world.

In my eyes, I think that Americans, they live like – how I say – they create a wall – you cannot see inside. Like, if you talk to me, you can see my face. And also you can see a little bit of me. And I cannot seeing you. They don't let you in. And it's so, so sad. It happen a lot. You know? Like when Americans get older, I've seen a lot of them at the nursing home, and it breaks my heart. They feel lonely! They work hard their whole, entire life. They don't sometimes – they don't even have time to see what means a family. To be together around the table, having dinner, doing nothing but be together. And then they will spend the rest of their lives in a nursing home with nursings that they have never met. It's – oh my God.

I'm working now for my kids. Mitali – She's twelve years old. And I think that she don't think like a twelve years old girl. She's really smart; she study at East Somerville. For some people the school of Somerville is not good but for them it's excellent. [Laughs] Excellent because in Brazil they don't have what they have in here. You know? And she's doing really, really well.

After September 11 [2001], if a policeman stop me and they see that I am not legal, they can handcuffs me and my husband as if we are a criminal. Imagine how my kids will feel. Oh my God! And I know a lot of immigrants that are really concerned. It's really hard for you, live in a place they will say, "I'm not legal here. I'm doing something

wrong." This feeling, if you are a person who wants to do things right, kills yourself.

If I could stay, and like, study a career, I'd probably study something to work with kids. Because if I'm a good mother, if I know how to raise my children, healthy with good feelings, walking at the bride's side, I think I could help a lot of kids, too. And I could do a really good job! Not just because of the money, but because you are helping someone when they need. And I know what means need something. And get it.

And even now, like in my case, we are thinking about go back. Be more close with people, more . . . human warm? Human warm. Yeah, I think we feel more it. I think so. I miss it. Human warm. I love it. I love it. Just love it. [Laughs]

TONY KAHN:

Morning Stories is produced by WGBH-FM in Boston. For more Morning Stories, why not check out our website at <wgbh.org/morningstories> – all one word. I'm Tony Kahn.

[End of Recording]

Notes from transcriber:

This is one transcript that really loses a lot in the transition from sound to the printed page. The emotion behind Fatima's words is as expressive – if not more so – as her words. Also, the musical background adds so much to the listening experience. Fatima's intelligence is evident when she's speaking; I hope that transcript readers will not let the fact that English is not her mother tongue interfere with their recognition of that.

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