



## The Lives of International Students, March 6, 2015

### **Title**

“A Doctoral Student from Colombia”

### **Date**

March 6, 2015

### **Location**

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

### **Summary**

Jara describes her upbringing in Bogotá, noting the unstable political situation during her youth, and also speaks to the importance of religion and of education to her family. In outlining her educational path, Jara describes research that she conducted in marine biology both as an undergraduate in Colombia and as a graduate student in Mexico. She then discusses the circumstances by which she enrolled at OSU, her early impressions of the Pacific Northwest, and the adjustments that she had to make upon settling in Corvallis. She likewise details her work as a Ph.D. student, her engagement with other communities of students, and components of American culture that she has found to be particularly compelling. The session concludes with Jara's thoughts on issues of importance to international students, and her ambitions for the future once she has finished at OSU.

### **Interviewee**

Andrea Jara

### **Interviewer**

Chris Petersen

### **Website**

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/international/>

## Transcript

**Chris Petersen:** Alright Andrea, if you would please introduce yourself with your name and today's date and our location.

**Andrea Jara:** Okay, I'm Andrea Jara, today is March 6th and we are in the library of Oregon State University.

**CP:** And you are the second interview that we're doing in our series on international students and issues they face in the US and at OSU, for the OSU Sesquicentennial Oral History Project. So let's start at the beginning. Where were you born?

**AJ:** I'm from Colombia, from Bogotá, the capital.

**CP:** Is that where you were raised?

**AJ:** Yeah, I grew up in Bogotá. I moved to Santa Marta there, it's a coastal city, but when I started to study. But like I don't know, maybe twenty-one years I was in Bogotá.

**CP:** What is your family background? What do your parents do?

**AJ:** Well my parents are, my mom is an economist and my dad's a civil engineer, but my mom just worked for a couple of years and then she decided to just stay at home and take care of my brothers and me. My dad worked his whole life in the, like in a public company in Bogotá. Now he's retired but he continued teaching classes at different universities. I have two brothers, two older brothers. One is a physician, the other is an architect, and I'm the only woman, the little child in the house.

**CP:** An accomplished family, it sounds like.

**AJ:** Yeah.

**CP:** What was it like growing up in Bogotá?

**AJ:** Well I like Bogotá, it's a big city, kind of crazy and each day is crazier. But I think that it's good to grow up in a city with a lot of things to do and to learn many possibilities. Well it's a developing country city, but I think it's a normal city. So it was great.

**CP:** What was your neighborhood like?

**AJ:** My neighborhood, well usually it's not, as you grow up here that you can go outside easily when you're a teenager or whatever. I used to live in a complex of fourteen houses, so it was great because within the houses, that it was a closed complex; you can easily go out with your friends and my mom just have to call for me for lunch, but was something that you can easily play. But in general, well it was a nice neighborhood, but a busy one because I live near avenues, big avenues, so that's why sometimes it's becoming difficult to go outside alone. But it was nice because we live in this closed environment within the houses, because it's safer, secure.

**CP:** What was the political situation like in Colombia when you were growing up?

**AJ:** Well I think that we were born during a difficult moment in the country, and unfortunately we are used to it, like we are a generation that grew up during a war, like Colombia has been in a civil—not civil war; like we have this war with the guerrillas, but unfortunately we grow up with that in mind, so for us not that we feel that as a war, but as the normal thing to happen. So we didn't know the peace in our country. So sometimes that make us not to feel that we are important or that should have. But, well hopefully this is going to end soon. We are going through a peace process that hopefully it's going to change things.

**CP:** Did this conflict make an impact on Bogotá specifically, or was it more an outlier area?

**AJ:** That's the problem, I think that the big cities used to live in this big bubble that you don't actually see what is happening with the rural areas. Sometimes when I was a kid I remember to hear about these car bombs, because we used

to have this problem that drug lords—but it was when I was really a small child, but I remember these car bombs in the cities, and the big cities, but maybe when I was a teenager that kind of thing starts to change. So it was kind of easier. Now you don't hear about the car bomb and thing, but yeah, in the cities probably you grew up in this bubble that not a lot of this war touched you directly.

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**CP:** What did you like to do growing up? What were some of the things that you cared about?

**AJ:** Care about. Well, I think that maybe hang out with your friends. I grew up in a Catholic environment because of my family, and I studied in a Catholic school. So there was a lot of groups, not focused on the Catholic religious part but in the helping people and helping communities. So I did a lot of this work trying to be with young people helping others and doing some social work. I did a lot of that in my school years. And then I started the biological side of my careers, like focused a lot of little things related with biology.

**CP:** Was your family a religious family?

**AJ:** Yeah, yeah I think that most of the people in Colombia is somehow religious. Yeah, I used to go every Sunday to the church with my parents. But like in the good way, not in a fanatic way. So my parents always tried to teach me to be a good person with the values that the religion taught you, not to be praying like the whole day, something like that, just to follow the good path.

**CP:** I'm guessing that there was a strong emphasis on education for you growing up, as well.

**AJ:** Yeah, well my parents all tried to gave us the best that they could. We can freely choose whatever we wanted to study or to do. They were really encouraging us, like education is a tool and we are trying to give you that tool, just try to use it. But yeah, they never—well I studied biology; I don't think that any parents make you study biology. Usually you don't make a lot of money from that, so no, I study what I study because I love it. So yeah, grow up in this nice environment.

**CP:** Was the school system organized for you the same way that we would understand it here in the US, as far as middle school, high school, that sort of thing, or was it organized differently?

**AJ:** No, it's kind of the same, but you can choose; it's not like here that you have to study on a school district. We can choose the schools that we want. There is some private schools, public schools, but I don't know if here it is the same difference. Like we have the private schools are for people that can pay independent schools, but it's normal, and the public schools are just for the low persons, people. So yeah, you can choose your school and you study like the normal things that you study your whole life where you're in the same school, you don't have to change from middle school to high school to a different one. So your friends from your first course and the one that you graduate are the same. So it's great. I think that's the different part from here to the US.

**CP:** What impact did the internet make on you growing up?

**AJ:** The internet, oh my god. Well I think that this is the generations that's, not suffer, but we get all the change, right? It was interesting at the beginning. I remember that the internet was just for the chatting rooms and with our friends. The only thing that you connected with at the beginning was to chat with someone, and I remember going to the chat like "hi, I'm Andrea, someone wants to talk with me?" That was the beginning of the internet for me, I suppose. But yes, that changed things. I remember that you used to do your homeworks going to books and looking for the, up, but now you find everything in internet. Yeah, we suffered the change. It was interesting, the whole process.

**CP:** What was your perception of the United States growing up?

**AJ:** Growing up, it changed a lot in me. In the beginning I suppose I saw the United States as something really far, and important people and fancy place. Then maybe when I was a teenager I say no, I never want to go to the United States, this is a—like when you start to realize the things, how the things really are, so you "no, I don't want to go to the United States, this is a—well I will never go there." And then it's like no, there's a lot of opportunities there, so probably I can look eventually to go or try to study there. I'm really happy too, take the decision of come here.

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**CP:** Did you consume a lot of American media when you were growing? Like in television, movies, that sort of thing?

**AJ:** Yeah, I suppose. Yeah, now I remember. We used to have this cable service, because we'd have only like two national channels, the imported ones and the regional ones, but we have these, like the cable, I don't know it came from Peru, I have no idea why. So we used to have a little Peruvian channels, but they have all the possible American channels. So I grew up with Cartoon Network and HBO channels and things, one channel of movies and cartoons, of course. And all the Disney movies and things, for instance. Yeah, a lot of influence from the United States.

**CP:** So when you finished high school, what happened next? You decided to continue pursuing education, I assume?

**AJ:** Yeah, I started to study marine biology as soon as I finished my high school.

**CP:** And where did you study?

**AJ:** I'm studying, there is only one university in Colombia that, where you can study marine biology, and you have to study three years in Bogotá that is the capital and then you have to move to Santa Marta that is a coastal city in the Caribbean, and you continue your education. Because our careers, our college years are five, not four, so I studied three in Bogotá and then I moved to Santa Marta, I studied two, and then you have to spend another year or so during your thesis. So I live another year there.

**CP:** And what did you study?

**AJ:** Well in that moment I did my thesis like in the soft bottoms of the ocean, but that's not my thing. I just did that one because that was a thesis opportunity that I had in that moment. But I didn't like it because I have to spend a lot of hours in the lab, and that's really not my thing. So then I decided to do something different, like I wanted to continue on studying or learning, but not of that. So I tried to work the first year, it was real difficult, so I started looking for my master and I went to study from Mexico, my master.

**CP:** Okay. Where in Mexico?

**AJ:** In Ensenada. It's like near Tijuana. You know, from the border. It was a really small town, a little—not a little, like a lot bigger than this one, but same idea, like a home city, a lot of schools there, and so full of students, similar to this one.

**CP:** What was that transition like for you, being in Colombia to Mexico? That's obviously a Spanish-speaking country, but you're not Mexican.

**AJ:** Yeah, it was not that difficult. The culture I think's really similar to the Colombia one, so the impact wasn't that difficult. Sometimes with the women was difficult. Usually people think that a lot of these misunderstanding that the Mexican men are usually like the powers one, like the one with the power, and I think that it's the women who have this power in Mexico. So at the beginning that was something different with my culture. So it was an impact. But it was really great. I mean it was a really great experience, I didn't feel any cultural shock or anything. The language is the same. So it was a really nice experience.

**CP:** Have you experienced any resistance to being a woman in science throughout your career? Has that ever been proven an issue?

**AJ:** Not really, I have heard that a lot. I don't know if this is a different generation or something, but for me I think it has been really easy. There's a lot of women right now in science. In my master I think that most of my partners or my peers were women more than men. So I think that it's not that we are living that segregation right now. I mean it's different. Yeah, I have never feel that.

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**CP:** Did your research change when you were in Mexico?

**AJ:** Did your what, sorry?

**CP:** Did your research? I assume your topic changed.

**AJ:** Yeah, a lot. Like to the other side. I worked with the fisheries of jumbo squid. Jumbo squids are these huge squids that you can find in the Pacific. And so I worked with the fisheries over there, because there was a recent invasion of these squids where I was, so I started to investigate what was that happening. So in that moment I went into fisheries, that's where I, what I love right now and I'm studying right now.

**CP:** Were you on research vessels out in the ocean?

**AJ:** Just once. Twice, because—I mean research vessels, because in fishery vessels it's kind of still difficult sometimes, because of the conditions and because most of the fishermen are men. So I wanted to go but my advisor in that time in Mexico said no, I'm not going to send you a whole night with twelve men, twelve fishermen in a vessel. So no. And because the jobs with fisheries are by night. So yeah, he didn't let me. But yeah, I did it twice in research vessels, so it was great. And the rest of my research was just taking the information at the ports and getting the—working with the vessels and the fishers companies. They get me the jumbo squids and I analyze them in the lab.

**CP:** Back in the lab.

**AJ:** No, well it was interesting because it was not in the lab, it was actually in the processing plants, because in the lab it was difficult, because I didn't keep the squids. These are commercial fisheries; they were not going to give me fifty squids per week that I was something, so I just used to go to the processing plants, process my squids and take measure of everything, and sometimes you have took something really special to the lab, I took it. It's a lot. But yeah, it was a more interesting work, outside work.

**CP:** So by the time that you were in Mexico, had you decided that you're going to pursue a life in academia and to move on to get a PhD? Or at what point, I guess I'm wondering, when you'd make that decision?

**AJ:** Well I think that, well for me, from my perspective, you have to continue studying, even if you're not going to continue trying to be a professor or whatever. I like to study. I thought that I needed to continue, that I wanted to do my PhD, and I wanted to do it in English, because it was—it's something that, like the English is the language, world language right now. So yeah, I decided to continue. Probably yeah, in that moment I say yeah, I like this, I like to be studying, I want to continue in a different country, I want to continue improving. So yeah, I decided to start looking for my PhD.

**CP:** So you came from Mexico to the United States then directly, more or less?

**AJ:** No, I went to Colombia again, I worked there for maybe three years, three years and a half. I got married on here and then I came to the United States.

**CP:** So how did you decide on Oregon State? How'd you get from Colombia to OSU?

**AJ:** Wow, well that was a long, long process. The people really laugh when I say this story because, well I got married, me and my husband, he's also a marine biologist but he took this other path, terrestrial path, and he—but we both wanted to do the PhD. We were trying to get in a same university but in different fields, so we just started to do this list in all the English-speaking countries, like the universities with some kind of program that we both like. Then we start to wrote to all the professors that made—that we can work with, but we had probably a hundred and fifteen universities or something like that. This were all like a whole year process and then we started to cross universities, trying to find these. Then we reduced it to the United States, and smaller and smaller and smaller.

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One day to both of us, two different professors answer our emails and say "okay, you can have a scholarship, you can come with us." And we really like Oregon State. It's really good in what he likes and it's really good in what I like. So we

started to look for scholarships and we got the scholarship the same, we both applied for the same scholarship and we got it.

**CP:** So you're sharing a scholarship?

**AJ:** It's kind of Colombia, it was giving scholarships—well, it's trying to improve the number of PhDs in the country, so they are giving maybe four hundred scholarships or so each year, so we applied to that and we got it. So they pay us for the five years that we are here, so it's great. So we both choose a great university and we are really happy with our programs and we're here. That's how the process went.

**CP:** So was this your first experience of the United States, coming to Corvallis?

**AJ:** No, I have come to the United States when I was fifteen. We used to have this, like you celebrate the sixteenth here we celebrate the fifteen, so it's like a tradition that you can choose between a party or you can choose to go somewhere. So I choose to come here to Miami to the parks in Orlando, and a cruise in Bahamas. It was great. And then when I was living in Ensenada, because it was so close to the United States, I used to come a lot to San Diego or just to Scripps Institution. But this was the first time living in the United States; that is really different than being a tourist.

**CP:** Sure. First time in the Northwest, as well.

**AJ:** Yeah, first time in the Northwest.

**CP:** So what was your impression of OSU and of Corvallis once you arrived?

**AJ:** I love it. I really love it, it was a really good impression. It's beautiful, a small town. I love the campus because our universities, especially in Bogotá, are not like the ones here that you have the campus and all the nice buildings. That university that I study in, just the buildings, like some buildings in the middle of the city, so it's not a nice place. So being here is amazing, that if you are tired to work you can go for a walk. And I arrive in summer, so the university was empty. It was really nice and I really like to be in Corvallis.

**CP:** Yeah, empty and sunny and warm.

**AJ:** Yeah, so what can be wrong about that?

**CP:** What year did you arrive at OSU?

**AJ:** Sorry?

**CP:** What year did you arrive?

**AJ:** 2013 in the summer.

**CP:** How'd you go about finding a place to live?

**AJ:** Well that was challenging because I arrived alone because some visa things, like I got admitted on summer and my husband got admitted on fall, so you can only arrive to the United States a month earlier than your classes start, so I arrive like a month and a half before him. I arrived to another Colombian apartment with other Colombia girl that is in my lab. We didn't know each other or anything but I wrote to her and said "hey, I'm arriving that day, you know a place that I can arrive something?" she lovely say "okay, you can stay at my house, at my place." It was great. And then she say to me "okay, you need to get a bike like right now because it's the only way that you can easily move here." So I know the next day she said "go to Craigslist and find a bike" and I started to look in Craigslist and in several other pages for a house.

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So I start right now, it's summer, it's the moment that you have. So I live in her apartment for a week and every day I look and look and look for apartments till finally I got one a week after that. I was really nervous because my English wasn't

that good in that moment, and you want to be sure that you are having a good deal and to know where are you signing for. So it was, yeah it was really nervous, but it went really well. She's helping a lot with that.

**CP:** And so you felt a bit of a language barrier upon arrival.

**AJ:** Well it's like you are always scared to speak, even if you know the language or you speak the language. You are always scared that people is not going to understand you or that you're going to say something wrong. And well, I have felt—like you'll learn the other language in your country and you only go to classes or you speak English when you are in the class, but not every day and all day long. The first day I used to have headaches when I arrived home because I have to be so concentrated trying to speak. But then you realize that the people—I don't know because of the small and people are used to international students, but the people are really, like are really patient with you and "okay, I don't understand you but what do you need? We can try to"—so it was like the first month was until you reach the point that say "okay, I have to talk, and if they don't understand me I repeat." But it's okay, it went really well. It's so very rare that you—but it's more a mental thing that you have to overcome. It was a process.

**CP:** Well tell me about settling into life as a PhD candidate.

**AJ:** PhD, well it's difficult, I think. It's another academic level; they are expecting a lot of you. You have also need to start pushing yourself because, well I am the one who decided to come here, like nobody made me come here, so you really have to push yourself to be better. Sometimes you say like no, I can't do this, it's difficult, but the next day you woke up saying like no, no, no, I can do it. It's a process. Sometimes it's difficult but in general it's amazing. You'll learn a lot, you'll improve a lot. Like I, like I try to avoid myself once in a while so I—so the Andrea that arrive a year and a half ago and the one that I am right now as a student, and you change and you learn a lot. It's great.

**CP:** Did you have a good idea of what you wanted to do for a research topic when you arrived, or has that been a process, determining that as well?

**AJ:** I'm still, I'm still in the process. I'm not sure yet. But no, I—well I arrived with a general, general idea, because for the scholarship that I had to apply in Colombia we had to create a small proposal, and I sent it here to my advisor; she liked it. She said "yeah, we can start with that." But then the process changed a lot, the idea changed a lot. I'm still trying to figure it out, because I'm doing something here but also I would like to work in Colombia with the tools that I'm learning here, so the international process is a little bit difficult.

**CP:** So are you in the midst of exams, qualifying exams at this point? Or are those still to come? Or—where are you at in your program?

**AJ:** No, they're still to come. I still need to do my—I haven't done even my committee, my first committee meeting, because I start, like I start from a different point. I arrived and my advisor was on a big project, so she offered me to if I want to start working on that project. It was kind of related with what I was applying on my proposal, and I start from there. I start to work with that, to take data, to take information, so I already have the information from my first chapter but I haven't done my first committee meeting. I will have my oral exams probably next—the beginning of next year. But I am starting to study right now, because sometimes it takes more time because of the language and with things to study. So it's not like the normal three or four months that people used to study, but like in every homework and in everything it takes a little bit more of you.

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**CP:** So you're doing a lot of reading these days.

**AJ:** Yeah. I'm starting to.

**CP:** But it sounds like you're starting to develop a topic too, a research topic. Can you tell us a little bit about what you think you might be doing?

**AJ:** Yeah, well I'm working with data for fisheries that are these fisheries that doesn't have enough information, enough data. So actually I already did all of this work here in Oregon with my advisor with this big project that I mentioned here.

We are trying to apply these new models, because usually fisheries are commercially important, have a lot of information, a lot of data, but fisheries that are not as important, commercially speaking, it doesn't have enough information, but you have to manage all the fisheries, even if they are not commercial important. So right now there's some new models that you can apply to try to get as much as you can from the fisheries, so I am applying one method in particular that use a lot of input from fisherman. So you take into account this expertise that the fisherman have.

So I'm doing this here in Oregon but my idea, it's to work with this in Colombia also, in our fisheries that are data-poor, like a lot more data-poor than the fisheries here in the United States. I compare how this work in developed countries and developing countries; it's really different, the scale that you are speaking, even if you can categorize both as data-poor, it's really different.

**CP:** Yeah. That sounds like a very interesting topic to explore. How's the transition been for your husband?

**AJ:** For my husband I think that it was, it has been like a similar process to him, even easier sometimes. I think that we as women, we tend to be more complicated in our heads and we found so many problems in things. But he loves to work, he's also trying to work in Colombia with data from Colombia. So it has been good for him, he already present his proposal with his committee and he's, yeah, he's also working a lot. The process, probably at the beginning it was a little bit easier for him because I, like I got everything ready when he arrived. He didn't have to go through that pressure of where are you going to live or what are you going to do with the same, the first week, the first month. So when he arrived that was really easy because I already got everything ready for him. So it was a little easier. But yeah, right now he's in the Forestry department and he's doing really well. We are both really happy here and we are enjoying a lot our PhD process.

**CP:** How have you gone about making friends or finding a community?

**AJ:** Well, I think that, I don't know if because of the culture or because of what, or because you always try to look for the most similar to you. We have the Latin American Student Association, so at the beginning it's like your first contact with the university, so we have a lot of Latin American friends and that has been great. It's the first support that you have, like the people that speak your language and that has been here for some time. So it helps a lot at the beginning. So we have a lot of Latin American friends, but also with the American people that we have, American friends. Sometimes it takes a little bit more time to be friends with the American people, but because culture's different, I supposed, but yeah we are really happy with friends here, we have a lot of activities.

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We also try to do different things at least once a month. So we try to look for volunteers. So, for example, Nature Conservancy have some volunteers activities, so we sometimes try to do that, so to know different people around town or something. We try to not just be with the university people. But yeah, we have a great community around us.

**CP:** Tell me about food.

**AJ:** Food, oh my god, I miss so much my food. Well, it's great, you have so many amazing things here, but I also miss the fruits. I miss so much the different fruits we have. Your foods here are great but you depend on the season and you don't have as many as we have in Colombia. So for example, I went in December to visit my parents in my Colombia and I drink so many juices, fruit juices of every fruit that I miss. Yeah, it's what I'm—I also try to cook Colombian foods once in a while here you can find some ingredients or, well in Amazon you find some things.

But yeah, we also are in love with the food here. We love to cook, we love to try new recipes, so we have this Oregon foods book with recipes, so once in a while we try to "okay, we're going to do something really Oregonian." So it's great. It's like you have to learn of the foods and the traditions of the places you go, so it's great. Yeah, of course you miss your Colombian foods, but it's okay.

**CP:** Have there been aspects of American culture that's surprised you or intrigued you living here, and things that were probably different from your perception of the US from abroad, now that you're a resident?

**AJ:** Yeah. At the beginning it bugged me that the people were so impact me that the people were so friendly, but extremely, extremely friendly, that I never thought that—I don't know if it's because well, some people say that it's

obviously because of the region and because of the city; probably in New York, if I arrive certain area, not going to be the same. But yeah, I never thought that people were going to be extremely friendly and that everything was going to look as in the movies. Because yeah, sometimes you say yeah, it's something in the movies, but there's so many things that you start to see here, like oh my god, this is real, this happened. So it's kind of funny, but yeah, it was a good impact, not a bad one.

**CP:** How about popular culture? Have things that Americans find important, like sports, for example, has come up, or holidays is another difference.

**AJ:** Yeah, so we have been trying to get into the culture, like you have to learn. We only have five years here to live and to learn and to—well like we have been trying to do all the things, but you know, well I still have to go to an American football, but we are learning first. So my husband have a friend that is really into American football, so he's the genius, so we invite him into the house, we watch the first—last year we watched the first match of Oregon State, but in TV, so he explain us; "okay this work this way and this way and this way." So this year in the Super Bowl we were into a room, some friends of him, so he again started explaining us, to live a Super Bowl. So I think this year we are going to go to our first game of the Beavers.

Also I'm starting to go this year to the basketball, so for example the civil war on Wednesday I went, I scream, I really was into it. It's like you have to learn about this things that you never do at home. Because well, in Colombia we are in soccer, like you always watch the games, soccer games. But here's is like a different culture and passion about that.

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And the holidays also, we have been trying to—our first Christmas here, we spent it with my husband's advisor. Last year with Thanksgiving with some of my lab mates' family, so yeah, we have been. It's different, but you have to learn and get into it.

**CP:** Yeah. Are there any places on campus or in town that have become important to you or are special to you?

**AJ:** Important or special. Well, not in particular. There's so many amazing places. Like I love the riverfront. Each time that it's sunny or these crazy sunny days that we have been having on this year, like I love to go there for a while. I like the river, like you can walk on the riverfront in any season, and then in summer you can go tubing in the river. Probably the river, I like that part of the city. We don't have—well we have a river but a really bad river in Bogotá. So I like this idea of how it's, that it's this river that is part of the town and you can do a lot of things around. I love the parks. In general, like so many parks that you have within the city and you can go walk or exercise or whatever. It's kind of great. That's something that I really, really like about Corvallis.

**CP:** Do you know anybody that's involved in the INTO program, or you have any connection with the INTO program?

**AJ:** The INTO program, well I, last year there was a lot of Columbian friends studying at INTO, but none of it much. I helped that last year with the international students' orientation as a volunteer because I didn't have this big orientation because I arrive in summer, that it's not a normal time to arrive, so I only had like this little orientation and I felt kind of lost at the beginning, a lot of academic things. So I said okay, I can help a little bit toward international students, being a volunteer on this. And it was really great that you can feel they're, how nervous they are when they arrive and they are lost, and "how can I get a bike, I need a bike" or a cellphone or what is the best place to eat or to live, or these things that it's easy with the people that have suffered the same.

**CP:** So it sounds like there's a bit of a Colombian community on campus.

**AJ:** Yeah. We are probably like fifteen. I don't know, fifteen, twenty people right now, but we are also very close with the rest of Latin American students. But yes, except for the Brazilians I think that we are the next bigger community. Well, bigger is like twenty, it's not that big. But yeah, we are real close. Actually where I live is an apartments complex; we are seven apartments of Colombian people, because we—these are really nice apartments, so whenever some Colombian is arriving or something we have our Facebook page and the people like "hey, I'm arriving, you know a place?" or something, so we try to be helpful with these things.

**CP:** That's cool.

**AJ:** Yeah.

**CP:** Is there a national holiday or anything where everybody gets together?

**AJ:** National holiday, no, but for example the World Cup last year was really interesting.

**CP:** Basically a national holiday.

**AJ:** Yeah, like we have these different countries in the World Cup so we try to play with every team, so the day that Peru plays we try to be Peruvians and the day that Brazil—except for the day that Brazil went against Columbia. But it was great. My parents were visiting at that moment, so my dad is really into soccer. So it was great. But yeah, the holidays, well maybe yes. We have like the, have the...there's not a word in English for that but in December we have nine days before Christmas we start, like to have some, we pray or something like that, like the nine days before, we pray to the holy kid that is going to born. So we usually meet in one house and we pray this thing and then we eat and we party. So it's something that we did the first year we were here, trying to celebrate that.

[0:45:38]

**CP:** Well, I'm sure we've touched on some of this already, but when you think about international students at OSU or in the United States, what are some of the issues you think that are really confronting them right now?

**AJ:** International students, okay maybe the language is the first thing. I think the writing, because you can speak and you can understand but sometimes the writing—and you have to write at this moment of your life in a really good level and you're not doing that because it's not your language. So for me, and I know that for a lot of international students it's something difficult, because I mean I'm a really good writer in Spanish, and right now I'm feeling like I'm not in English. So it's difficult. It's something that you have to overcome and it takes you more time, so you have to plan ahead, like my orals or I will have to present a write-in exam for the qualification, so it takes more time to us to do things.

So a presentation, I love to do presentations in classes or wherever. It's really easy for me, I don't have problems with the public or whatever. But here it takes me the double to prepare a presentation, like I have to...because if you're in the middle of a presentation and you don't find the word that you want to say, it's like you get lost. And in Spanish it's easy to find what you want to say, but in English sometimes it's not as easy or you don't have the color that you want. So probably this is one of the things that you really have to struggle with. Well, I don't feel any other struggle. Maybe at the beginning yeah, I like to socialize or to break that barrier between the American culture and the Latino American culture, but we are more, I don't know, like informal people in our relations. So here you have to be a little bit careful with that. Yeah, like I don't know, yeah it's not bad, it's just different, and you are not in your country; you are the one visiting so you are the one who has to change, not the people here. But it was at the beginning like sometimes were difficult to "hey, she didn't say hi," or "why she didn't say goodbye" or "why she's angry with me" or what, but you get used to; it's different how you interact with people.

**CP:** Well you've got a little ways to go on your doctorate still, but what is your vision for your future? Are you going to go back to Colombia, you think?

**AJ:** Yeah, I actually have to because of the scholarship I have. I have to come back at least for two years to Colombia. It's like the deal that we have with the government, like they pay for us this five years, but then we have to come back and work in the country. And it's the idea, that's all what I'm trying to work with Colombia right now in my thesis, because I really want to help the fisheries in Colombia. It's not just because I need the work or whatever but I'm doing this because I really want to change a lot of things and to help the fisheries, to manage the fisheries, to associate, like I think we have a lot of people that rely on fisheries for a living and they deserve something better than they have right now.

So yeah, I really want to come back and work, I don't know if in NGOs or universities. For sure I'm not going to continue the academic path, like to be an assistant professor or looking to be a professor. I'm more into research side, so probably work for the government or for NGOs or whatever, trying to develop projects for the fisheries in Colombia.

[0:50:14]

**CP:** And there's a pretty wide network of NGOs that are in Colombia in this area?

**AJ:** More or less, not that much but in the last few years the fisheries have been starting to have a better focus in Colombian government, because usually have been really a second, in a second place. Right now I'm trying to work for, well, in the last three years ago started National Fisheries Authority in Colombia. So I'm trying to work with them. They are the one that are trying to take all the NGOs or all the processes to work towards better fisheries. But you know, we have some small NGOs, some big ones and WWF or Conservation International, but well I would love to work with any of them.

**CP:** Terrific. Well I want to thank you Andrea, this has been very interesting and a lot of fun for me and I appreciate you sharing your perspective on the arc of your life and your experience here in Corvallis, and I wish you all the best.

**AJ:** No, thank you for paying attention.

**CP:** Sure, thanks.

[0:51:29]