



# African Immigrants Project

## Interview transcription

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### Belaynesh Henok

**Interview date:** February 4, 2001

**Location of interview:** Her braiding salon

**Country of origin:** Ethiopia

**Ethnic group/language group:** Amharic

**Religion:** Ethiopian Orthodox

**Profession:** Owns a braiding salon

**Level of education:** High school

**Location of residence in Philadelphia:** Upper Darby

At the time of the interview, Ms. Henok had been in Philadelphia for three and a half years. Her command of English is limited. She came here on a Diversity Visa with her husband, whom she has since divorced. She came to the Philadelphia area because a cousin who lives here sponsored her. She is an active member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but does not participate in many of community association activities.

### Interview Transcription

Interviewer: Leigh Swigart (LS)

Interviewee: Belaynesh Henok (BH).

[START SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

LS: Tell me your full name please.

BH: Belaynesh Elsa Henok.

LS: What's Elsa? Elsa is ---

BH: That one's my nickname.

LS: Your nickname. Okay, so say your name again.

BH: Belaynesh, B-e-l-a-y-n-e-s-h.

LS: What country are you from?

BH: Ethiopia.

LS: What's your ethnic group? Are you from a particular ethnic group or language group?

BH: Amharic.

LS: You're Amharic, okay. And your native language is Amharic?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. And how long have you been in Philadelphia area?

BH: Mmmm... three and a half years.

LS: Three and a half years?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And before that?

BH: Just came from Ethiopia.

LS: You just came from Ethiopia?

BH: Yes.

LS: Oh, okay

BH: I came like, uhhh, August 1997.

LS: 1997?

BH: Yes.

LS: And where do you live? What neighborhood do you live in? Do you live in Southwest Philadelphia?

BH: No, this my workplace. I live in Upper Darby.

LS: Who do you live with?

BH: I live myself.

LS: You live by yourself?

BH: Yes.

LS: Okay. [cell phone rings]

LS: Do you have any other relatives here in Philadelphia?

BH: Yeah, my cousin she live here.

LS: Do you have other relatives in the US?

BH: No.

LS: None? No other relatives?

BH: No, I have a lot of cousins in Virginia.

LS: In Virginia?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. And your work? Just tell me, just for the tape, what your work is. You have a braiding salon?

BH: Yes.

LS: Do you own it?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Can you tell me a little bit about what your, ummm --- did you go to school in Ethiopia?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Can you tell me what your school experience was?

BH: Just I'm going for high school.

LS: You went to high school?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And where are you from in Ethiopia? Are you from Addis Ababa?

BH: From Diradawa.

LS: Okay, D-r--.

BH: D-i-r-a-d-a-d-a. D-a-w-a.

LS: D-a-w-a.

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. And that's where you grew up and that is where you went to high school?

BH: ( ).

LS: Okay, so, tell me --- did you go to high school in Amharic language or did you do -- learn English also?

BH: English.

LS: And English, you studied as a subject?

BH: A subject.

LS: You studied it as a subject. And then the rest of the subjects were in Amharic?

BH: Mmmm, just --- yeah.

LS: Yeah, okay. And then what happened after you got out of high school? You worked in Ethiopia?

BH: I worked for my family job.

LS: What does your family have?

BH: Like, umm, a music shop.

LS: You mean like records?

BH: Yeah.

LS: What kind of music do they sell? Everything?

BH: Everything.

LS: A lot of Ethiopian music, though?

BH: Yes.

LS: And this was where? This was also in your hometown?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Is that a pretty big town?

BH: Yeah.

LS: So tell me, how did you end up coming to the United States?

BH: What ( )?

LS: How did you come to the United States?

BH: I got a DV. Do you know DV?

LS: Oh, you came on the diversity lottery?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And when did you --- why did you apply? How did you hear about the DV and why did you ---?

BH: No. My husband applied, but he got it.

LS: Your husband applied?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. Is your husband here?

BH: I'm going to divorce last --- umm --- I'm going to divorce last year.

LS: So you came here and your husband was here and then you split up.

BH: Yes.

LS: So your husband applied and did he get it the first time? Did he have to apply for several years? Or he did it several times? Or did the first time he applied ---

BH: No, just several times.

LS: Is that some thing that a lot of people are doing in Ethiopia now? They apply for the DV?

BH: Yeah, a lot of people!

LS: A lot of people?

BH: All of people, I think. [both laugh]

LS: And why is that? Why are people--? Is it because the economy? Is it because there are so many other people from Ethiopia who've come here? Why does everybody want to leave?

BH: I don't know. Everybody like America, I don't know what happen.

LS: Is it because they think they can make more money? Do they think it's safer or why do you think that ---?

BH: I don't know. I like America because, uhhh, you can earn a lot of money.

LS: Um-hum. You can have work and ---

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. So your husband got that and then, got the DV, and then he could bring his wife.

BH: Yes.

LS: You don't have children?

BH: No, I don't ---

LS: Okay. So why Philadelphia? Why did you and your husband come to Philadelphia?

BH: Yeah, because my cousin she sponsor to me.

LS: Okay, so your cousin sponsored you?

BH: Yeah.

LS: So even when you have the DV, you have to find a sponsor?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Oh, you do? You have to find a family member or someone who will --- ?

BH: Yes.

LS: And that means they will just help you financially until you have your own job or ---? What does it mean to sponsor somebody?

BH: Because if you coming the first time, where do you stay here?

LS: Okay, so it's sort of to ---

BH: And then my cousin house like, almost two years, living together.

LS: And your husband was there also?

BH: Yes. ( ) Coming the first time it's confused here.

LS: Yeah. How long has your cousin been here?

BH: Here in ( )?

LS: Excuse me.

BH: Oh, my cousin?

LS: Yeah, your cousin.

BH: Ohhh, almost more than twenty-six years.

LS: Oh, okay. Wow. Did she come as a refugee then?

BH: I don't know.

LS: You don't know. But most Ethiopians now don't come as refugees? They come on the DV, right?

BH: Yeah.

LS: You know, twenty years ago a lot of people were coming as refugees ---

BH: Refugee, yes ---

LS: But now they are not refugees. So when people come they come on the DV?

BH: The DV.

LS: Okay. [Pause in recording] What had you heard about the United States before coming here?

BH: It's nice, umm. Like I am going to go every time the movies. America is like that. But if you coming here it's different.

LS: What was it like when you got here? What were your first reactions when you came? Does your cousin live in Upper Darby also?

BH: No, no, no. She live in Northeast.

LS: In Northeast Philadelphia?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. So when you arrived what did you think? What were your impressions? It was different from the movies?

BH: Yes, very different [laughs].

LS: In what way?

BH: No because I don't know. It's not life like that. If I live in Ethiopia, maybe if you coming here, you know, I am going to show the actor, or something --- maybe I live like that.

LS: Yeah.

BH: But if you coming here it's different.



LS: Were you surprised that there was poverty? That there were poor people, or were you surprised by what the city looked like?

BH: You know, my country somebody he work like eight hours but he live a good life. This country everybody works sixteen hours, something like that. Different.

LS: And when you arrived, did you meet a lot of Ethiopians besides your cousins?

BH: Yes.

LS: Does she socialize --- her friends are Ethiopian?

BH: Yeah.

LS: So when you arrived here --- how was your English when you arrived? Was your English ---you didn't speak that much English or a little bit?

BH: A little bit. ( )

LS: When you arrived, did you take English as a Second Language courses?

BH: Yeah. Umm-hmm.

LS: How did you find out about classes? Did Ethiopians ---

BH: ( ) coming here, before I am going to the English class. ( ) I'm going to start the community college.

LS: Okay, you started at community college?

BH: Yes.

LS: But how did you find out? Did your friends tell you that there are these classes?

BH: No, my cousin she find for me.

LS: Okay. Did that help a lot?

BH: Yes, help a lot. [noise in the background, people talking] Maybe she's coming here

LS: Uh-huh.

BH: (laughs) ( ) [sounds like name]. She's coming.

LS: Okay, good. Were there other Ethiopians or other Africans in your English classes?

BH: Yeah.

LS: There were? Other Ethiopians, even?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. So you had never lived in another country before ---

BH: No.

LS: You came straight?

BH: Yes.

LS: Okay. What are other countries that Ethiopians go to? A lot of Ethiopians go to Canada, right? Is that right? Are there other countries that Ethiopians go to besides the United States? To Canada?

BH: Yeah! Go everywhere.

LS: They go everywhere ---

BH: Yeah.

LS: They go everywhere that they can get visa? Mmmm, okay. Who did you leave at home, your whole family? Your mother, your father, your brothers, your sisters?

BH: I have two brothers. I don't have a sister.

LS: Are you in contact with them?

BH: Yes. ( ) I give a call from my father.

LS: You telephone them?

BH: Yes.

LS: That must be hard.

BH: Yeah, I went last year ---

LS: Okay.

BH: I'm going to visit my family or ( ).

LS: Would you like your family to come here?

BH: Yeah!

LS: You would? You'd like to sponsor them to come here?

BH: Yeah, yeah. My mum, she's came.

LS: Your mother what?

BH: She came last month.

LS: She came to visit?

BH: Yeah.

LS: But she doesn't want to stay?

BH: No. I think she come back next month.

LS: What did your mother think of it here?

BH: No, she don't want it. [laughs] Anytime she will not come back.

LS: A lot of people have told me, a lot of Ethiopians have told me, that their parents do not want to move here.

BH: No, she don't want to come here.

LS: What didn't she like?

BH: She like for my country, I don't know. Because my country, a lot of people, social life. Very social life, but this country everybody work, everybody is busy.

LS: Yeah.

BH: Yeah.

LS: It's very different.

BH: Yes.

LS: So when she came here and you were working here, did she come in with you or did she stay --- ?

BH: She came with me but ( ) and it's the workplace.

LS: Yeah, sure.

BH: ( ) people ( ).

LS: What do you miss most about Ethiopia?

BH: Oh, I miss a lot. [laughs]

LS: You miss everything?

BH: Everything.

LS: But you still would like to stay here?

BH: Me?

LS: Yeah.

BH: Yeah, I want to stay here.

LS: You have a green card and permanent residence, but you're not a citizen?

BH: No, I am not.

LS: Do you think you'll become a citizen?

BH: Yes.

LS: What do you like the most about the United States?

BH: The most what?

LS: What do you like about the United States?

BH: Everything I like about the United States. It's free, you know. You go to work, you ( ) good life, you get it.

LS: Good life if you work hard?

BH: Yes. That's why I work sixteen hours. [laughs] I work a lot! ( ).

LS: I guess when you have a hair salon, you sort of have to, huh?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Tell me a little bit about how you got into the hair braiding business. In Ethiopia, do women braid their hair?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Do they, like this?

BH: Yeah, but the style is different. If you come the first time, I am going to start the work, the hair braiding salon. I work like eight months or something, nine months.

LS: So you came in and you took English and at the same time you worked in a braiding salon?

BH: Yes.

LS: And who owned that braiding salon?

BH: Mary Hair Braiding, Germantown neighbourhood, make the hair braiding.

LS: What is it?

BH: Make the hair braiding.

LS: Oh, the Senegalese woman?

BH: Yeah, Senegalese woman.

LS: Maty? [LS emphasizes “t”]

BH: Maty.

LS: I know her. Oh, so you worked at Maty’s salon. And what was it like, what was it like working for her?

BH: Yes, she’s nice.

LS: She’s nice.

BH: Oh, she’s very nice. She learn everything for me. She show me everything. That’s why after I work for nine months or something, I got my shop. My own shop. She learn me lot. She teach me everything.

LS: So when you came here, how did you find out that Maty needed a hair braider?

BH: I know the braid for my country.

LS: You knew how to braid already?

BH: Yes. But if you come in my --- in my cousin, uhhh, she work in Temple ---

LS: Umm-hmm.

BH: Like, you know, Mary Hair --- behind for Mary Hair Braiding?

LS: Umm-hmm.

BH: She work with her there, that’s ( ).

LS: What’s the name of your cousin?

BH: Addisalem.

LS: I met her.

BH: Yeah.

LS: I met her. I actually tried to call her at Temple once.

BH: Yeah.

LS: Where she said, "Call me" and I never got through to her. I think I left a message. I always wanted to look her up. I met her at the church.

BH: Yeah.

LS: Oh, now I'm understanding everything. What does she do at Temple?

BH: I think she's in the Registrar's or something.

LS: At the Registrar's Office. So she knew that Maty Salon was there?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. And so you went in there and asked if she needed a hair braider or how did you get the job?

BH: Yes, she asked for her. "She knows the braid?" "Yeah, she knows that." "Okay."

LS: Is that the where your cousin gets her hair braided? Is that why she knew Maty? Or ---?

BH: No, just, umm, she is my --- my cousin ---?

LS: Umm-hmm.

BH: She is the customer for Mary.

LS: She's the customer, okay.

LS: Did you have any trouble --- ummm --- I don't know, is Maty's, is her English very good? Did you have any trouble communicating with her?

BH: Nah, nah.

LS: You both spoke English to each other?

BH: Yeah.

LS: It was okay?

BH: Yeah, okay.

LS: She had a baby recently, didn't she?

BH: Yeah, she got a baby.

LS: So you worked there and then eventually you got enough money to get your own shop? Or, how did you --- ?

BH: Yeah, my cousin she help me. Yeah, I work two job after that. I work in "Eleven Seven" somewhere, and after that I work for Mary nine to something. [laughs]

LS: So you worked hard?

BH: Yeah.

LS: The first couple of years, was it hard to adjust to working that much?

BH: Yes. I work two jobs.

LS: Do you think that you've changed since you came here from Ethiopia? Do you think that coming to the United States has changed you?

BH: Yeah.

LS: How has it changed you?

BH: I don't know. I own my job.

LS: Just the working and everything else?

BH: Yes.



LS: Do you think if you went back to Ethiopia now to live, it will be hard to be in Ethiopia?

BH: I don't think so. [laughs]

LS: You don't think so?

BH: Because everybody don't like, like, to work like this. In my country.

LS: So, basically, if you could have a good job in Ethiopia, you would prefer to live there?

BH: I don't decide yet.

LS: You haven't decided yet? Okay. I hear a lot of people say that you can have a job here but life isn't as pleasant.

BH: Yeah.

LS: That's what people from almost any country in Africa will tell you.

BH: Yeah.

LS: "Yes, you can have a job and that's the good thing."

BH: Yes.

LS: "You can save money, you can send money home or whatever, but life is just not as nice."

BH: Yeah.

LS: And I lived in Africa for a long time --- I lived in Senegal for a long time, so I think life is a lot nicer there.

BH: Yeah, it is nice.

LS: So I understand. So, do you expect to have your salon for a long time? Is that what you would like to do to build your business?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: So you see this is as sort of what you'll be doing for a long time, is have a hair salon?

BH: Yeah, almost.

LS: But you think you will have it for a long time? Go on and develop it?

BH: Yes.

LS: What it's like? People tell me that there is a lot of competition? There's a lot hair salons now. It that hard?

BH: Yes, it is hard. Unless you do a good job, everybody come.

LS: If you do a good job, then you have customers who return and return?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And do you advertise?

BH: Just, I'm gonna --- business card.

LS: You do business cards but you don't have a radio ad, or anything --- ?

BH: No.

LS: It is probably very expensive to do that.

BH: Yes. I cannot afford that.

LS: And then who are the people who work for you? Who are they, the braiders? Where are they from?

BH: Different country.

LS: Different countries, what countries?

BH: Senegal, umm, West Africa.

LS: From West Africa?

BH: Yes, West Africa.

LS: How do you find the people who work for you?

BH: Some people, we work together before.

LS: But you don't advertise for the people, it's just ---

BH: No.

LS: When you need somebody you can find somebody?

BH: Yes.

LS: Okay. How does it work when --- they get a certain amount of the money paid for the hair style and then you get the other part? How are the braiders paid? Somebody comes in and they have a hair style that costs a hundred dollars. You get some of the hundred dollars and the braider gets some of the hundred dollars?

BH: No. I am going to pay her half.

LS: You pay her half. Is that almost what every salon does? The owner takes half and the braider takes half.

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: And are a lot of the salons around --- do people charge the same amount?

BH: No, I don't think so. It's different.

LS: It's different.

BH: It depend on the area.

LS: Oh, I see, oh, right. So if you are in Center City ---

BH: Center City is too expensive.

LS: Center City is more expensive than here.

BH: Yes.

LS: Okay. And what about Germantown?

BH: That one is expensive too for here.

LS: It's more expensive than Southwest Philly?

BH: Uh-huh.

LS: So do you think that having lower prices then gets you more customers?

BH: I don't think so because it's just the neighborhood.

LS: So people just want to come to the place that is closest?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. How do your customers decide what hairstyles to have? Do they look at pictures?

BH: Yes! They have a catalogue.

LS: Okay, they'll look at pictures and each hairstyle costs a certain amount?

BH: Yeah, no, no, no, it's not the same. But if you look at the catalogue, the prices are there.

LS: The prices are there and then they go through and they look. And then do they choose the kind of hair they want? Is there human hair ---

BH: Yes.

LS: or synthetic hair?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And so human hair is a lot more expensive?

BH: ( )

LS: Are most of your customers are Americans?

BH: Yeah, all American.

LS: You don't have other African women come in here to get their hair done?

BH: No. Sometimes ( ) American people.

LS: Okay, okay. So if African women have their hair braided they have one of their friends do it or something? They don't pay to have it done?

BH: Yeah.

LS: But your cousin was having her hair done?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Right.

BH: Umm-hmm. My cousin she don't know the braid.

LS: But didn't you say that your cousin used to go to Maty's?

BH: Yes, yes.

LS: So she had her hair done?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: Do you ever have misunderstandings with your clients about --- ?

BH: Sometimes.

LS: What kinds of misunderstandings?

BH: Sometimes people talk too fast.

LS: You mean you don't understand their English?

BH: Yes.

LS: But are there ever any other problems --- that their hair style is not what they expected or they are unhappy with --- I don't know, whatever? You don't have problems with those people.

BH: No.

LS: So you have customers very content.

BH: Yes.

LS: Okay. So the people that you spend time with here, do you spend time mostly with other Ethiopians?

BH: Mmm-hmm.

LS: What is it like to live alone? Is that hard after living in Ethiopia? People probably live with their families, right?

BH: Yeah.

LS: It's not lonely to live alone or --- ?

BH: Mmm.

LS: You don't feel alone living in an apartment by yourself? Does that feel funny or --- ?

BH: Well, at first it's confused but now ---

LS: Now you're used to it?

BH: Yes.

LS: And you have a car?

BH: Yeah, I have a car.

LS: So you can go back and forth to Upper Darby.

LS: Where do Ethiopians tend to see each other? Where do they socialize? In each other's homes? Do they do --- are there restaurants? Do they see each other at church? Where do you see all your friends?

BH: You see friends everywhere.

LS: Everywhere?

BH: Yeah.

LS: So people are always having other people to their homes?

BH: Yes, because, you know, the system is not like that, you know? The community is very helpful in my country. Everything, like, the relationship is very, umm, like, if you need the friend, anytime, you contact.

LS: So you are very tight?

BH: Yes.

LS: So people just call each other up and say, "I am going to come over" or "Come over to my place" ---

BH: Yeah!

LS: And you see each other all the time.

BH: Yeah, all the time.

LS: And how long have you been going to the church?

BH: Just one day a week.

LS: No, but have you been going to that church since you arrived here?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And is the church important for people? Do they look forward to it?

BH: Yes, everybody ( ).

LS: Are there some Ethiopians who are not Orthodox? Who are Protestant or go to the other churches?

BH: Mmm-hmm. Protestants, Orthodox, Adventist.

LS: Yeah, yeah, there's an Adventist. Is it actually in Upper Darby, 69<sup>th</sup> Street? Is that Adventist, Seventh Day Adventist Church?

BH: Mmm-hmm.

LS: Do you know people who go to that church?

BH: Yes, some people.

LS: So most of the people you know are Orthodox and they go to the church?

BH: Mmm-hmm.

LS: Does the church, umm, I know you go on Sundays but are there other things that the church organizes? Does the church have --- oh, I don't know --- celebrations ---

BH: Sometimes.

LS: That are religious celebrations?

BH: Mmm-hmm.

LS: Do they ever help people who have just arrived in Philadelphia to meet other people or do they help people with their visa problems? Does the church do anything besides just being a church?

BH: ( )

LS: So it's really a religious place?

BH: Yes.

LS: Are you a member of the Ethiopian Association?

BH: No.

LS: So you are not involved with the association at all?

BH: Uh-uh.



LS: You do not go to any of their events like the Ethiopian New Year celebration or any of those?

BH: I don't go sometimes because I don't have time.

LS: Yes.

BH: That is why I don't go. [laughs]

LS: I know you are being --- having a hair salon. It must be really hard. **[END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]**

**[START OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1]**

LS: So do you ever go to Ethiopian restaurants or bars?

BH: Yes, sometimes, yeah.

LS: Is that a place where people would see each other sometimes?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Do you have any contacts with other hair braiders?

BH: Just Maty.

LS: So there is no association of hair braiders? There is no --- I don't know --- you have never had meetings with hair braiders?

BH: No.

LS: What are your relationships ---? Do you have any ---? I know last Fall there was some conflict between African hair braiders and African American hair braiders. The salon owners.

BH: Nooo.

LS: You didn't hear anything about that?

BH: No.

LS: Okay, okay. What kind of food do you eat?

BH: Injira.

LS: You eat all Ethiopian food?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Where do you get --- can you find everything you need to make all the Ethiopian dishes? Either groceries you go to? Or where do you buy ---?

BH: No, somebody ( ) she sell it, the store.

LS: There's an Ethiopian store?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: Which one is that?

BH: Here, 65 something, Woodland, Meskerem Variety Store.

LS: Oh, that's right here. And you can buy tef flour and things like that?

BH: Yeah.

LS: So it is 65<sup>th</sup> and Woodland?

BH: Yeah.

LS: What's Meskerem? Cause I know there's a restaurant called that, too. Is that the name of a place?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay.

BH: No, Meskerem is, like, the first year of my country. Like, this country January, right?

LS: Mmm-hmm..

BH: My country the first year is Meskerem.

LS: Okay.

BH: That's why.

LS: So it's the first month in the Ethiopian Calendar?

BH: Yes.

LS: In Orthodox calendar?

BH: Yes.

LS: Do you like hair braiding?

BH: Yes.

LS: Is it giving you the income that you are satisfied with?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And do you support people at home? Do you send people money at home?

BH: Yeah.

LS: How do you send it? Do you send it Western Union?

BH: Western Union.

LS: And your family can get it right in their city? They can go and get collect the money?

BH: Yeah. Just ten minutes from the ( ).

LS: Does your family --- do they really depend on the money that you send?

BH: No.

LS: So it is just sort of an extra thing?

BH: Just ( ) ---

LS: They have a shop and they are doing okay --- okay --- so you're not ---

BH: Because my family work their own business.

LS: Right, so they're doing okay.

LS: Did they approve of your coming here?

BH: Hmm?

LS: Did they approve? Were they upset that you came here? Did they want you ---?

BH: Yeah.

LS: They didn't want you and your husband to come here?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. That must have been hard. And then your mother comes and she doesn't like it. [both laugh]

LS: Are you --- do your parents --- do you feel any pressure to get married again? Do they ---?

BH: I think yeah.

LS: They would like you to get married again?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: Do a lot of Ethiopians here meet each other and get married here?

BH: Yes.

LS: Do very many Ethiopians marry non-Ethiopians? Americans or ---?

BH: Yeah, some people get married ( ).

LS: Yeah, okay. So people don't disapprove of that?

BH: No.

LS: If you married an American man, people wouldn't say "Oh, look at what Elsa did"?

BH: No.

LS: It's okay?

BH: It's okay.

LS: Do you socialize with Americans at all? Do you have American friends? Or you're mostly with Ethiopians?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And why is that? Just because you feel more comfortable with Ethiopians?

BH: No, uhhh, that's ( ) --- I don't have time for relations or anybody else. ( ) like, to call, to wanna talk to him, that's it.

LS: So you have relations with your customers that are just --- ?

BH: Yeah, just customer.

LS: Professional?

BH: Yeah.

LS: And then that's it. Okay. When you look at people who have children here, does it seem like it's hard for them to bring up --- Ethiopians to bring up children?

BH: Yes, it's a very hard.

LS: And how is it hard?

BH: Yeah, because, you know, you work a lot of time. Who take care for baby?

LS: Yeah.

BS: My country, nobody work like --- if you work husband, you don't work the wife.

LS: Yeah.

BS: She take care the baby.

LS: Yeah.

BS: This country you work.

LS: Would that --- ummm --- one day, would you like to have children here? Are you sort of afraid to do something like that?

BH: No, I gotta children one day. [laughs]

LS: You have to have children one day? [both laugh]

BH: Yeah.

LS: Do any Ethiopian families bring over their mother, for example, for a few years, to help?

BH: Yes.

LS: Are people starting to do that?

BH: Yes. Umm-hmm. My brother did like that.

LS: Umm-hmm. Do you think your mother will be willing to come over ---

BH: Yes.

LS: and to take care of the baby?

BH: Yeah.

LS: She would?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: Okay. I guess it's the just your grandchildren you have to do that. [both laugh]

BH: Yeah!

LS: Are there any other older Ethiopian people in the community who help other families?

BH: Yes.

LS: So they will take care of other people's children?

BH: Yes, yeah.

LS: What do you think will happen to your church when the generation that are kids now grow up? How will they be able to go to church? Do they speak Amharic very well?

BH: Yes. Yeah, maybe if born here they don't speak Amharic, but the church, after Saturday, you got one hour or two hour, you have to teach the community college.

LS: You have to when?

BH: Teach English, umm, teach in Amharic.

LS: Oh, so they do that at the church?

BH: No, the community college.

LS: Oh, the community association ---

BH: Yeah.

LS: Do a lot of children go to that, do you think ---

BH: Yes.

LS: So they are learning?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: Do you think they'll learn well enough to be able to understand the whole church service?

BH: No, they don't understand that.

LS: They can be able to follow it, still, a little bit.

BH: Yes.

LS: Do you have a lot of friends with children? Does your cousin have children?

BH: She does not.

LS: She's not married?

BH: She's married.

LS: She's married, but she doesn't have children?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. Do you have any other close friends who have children?



BH: No.

LS: Most of your friends are not married?

[No audible response. Pause.]

LS: What are relationships --- I know a lot of your customers are African Americans. Do Africans and African Americans tend to have good relations?

BH: Hmm.

LS: Do they feel so that they have a kind of special relationship?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: Yeah?

BH: Yeah, it's a nice person.

LS: Yeah?

BH: I don't have any problems till I, till like, I work two years, more than two years, I don't have any problem.

LS: I know you don't have children, so you don't have this concern yet, but, do you see that your Ethiopian friends --- are they trying to bring up their children as if they were in Ethiopia? In other words, are their kids becoming more American? When you see Ethiopian children here ---

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: --- do they seem more American than Ethiopian?

BH: Yeah!

LS: So do they --- do they have a behavior? Do they act like more like American kids?

BH: Yes. They gotta change in behavior. Like if you are born here, they be very like the same of this country.

LS: Yeah. Is that hard for Ethiopian adults?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Are they very frustrated ---

BH: It is very hard because the character is different.

LS: The character's different? Does that create some sort of conflict? Do kids sometimes have problems with their parents because they're thinking in different ways?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: Yeah. How do people resolve that? Do they ever --- does the church ever help them if they have problems?

BH: Yes, yes.

LS: What do they ---

BH: The church every time if you're going --- the children --- ?

LS: Umm-hmm.

BH: "Don't do that, this one is good, this is bad, this one ( )."

LS: So they are trying to train them in certain ways of being?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Do they ever do anything in English for the children to make sure they understand or it's all in Amharic?

BH: Yeah, yeah.

LS: They do it in English?

BH: Yes.

LS: Do they have Sunday school? Is that what ---

BH: No Sunday school. Just, I don't know, just one day for a week, the children time.

LS: The children go to the church?

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: And it's in English.

BH: Yeah. Not --- not like the church. But, before the adults going to the church, the children is one room.

LS: Oh, okay.

BH: Separately.

LS: And is it the priest who does it or is it somebody else who --- ?

BH: Somebody.

LS: Somebody else? So it's before the service?

BH: Yeah.

LS: That's interesting. So that's just to help them understand how to be an Ethiopian. [laughs] Okay.

BH: ( ).

LS: I'm almost finished, okay?

BH: That's all right.

LS: So you think that you will stay in the United States --- for --- forever?

BH: I don't know.

LS: You don't know?

BH: I haven't decided.

LS: You haven't decided. So you don't know if you'll become a citizen or --- ?

BH: Yeah.

LS: You think you will become a citizen or you don't know?

BH: No, next years maybe I will be citizen.

LS: Umm-hmm.

BH: After that, I don't decide.

LS: Why would you become a citizen? What is the advantage of being a citizen? Would you like to vote or do you think it's ---

BH: Yes.

LS: --- you're more secure?

BH: More secure and vote.

LS: Umm-hmm. If somebody in your hometown in Ethiopia asked you if they should come, if they should apply for the DV, or if their name came out of the DV, if they should come --- what would you say to them?

BH: I don't understand?

LS: If somebody in your hometown said, "I applied for the lottery, and my name came out. Should I go?"

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: What would you say? If they asked you whether it was a good thing to come to the United States, would you say, "Yes, it is" or "No" --- ?

BH: Yeah! Yes, it is.

LS: So you would recommend --- ?

BH: Yeah.

LS: You would recommend it? Would you tell people about the hard parts?

BH: Nooo ---

LS: You wouldn't tell them? [both laugh]

BH: I think, I would, like, it's good for try for leaving, I say.

LS: Umm-hmm. But do you never tell people back home that life is also hard, and that you have to work really hard? Or ---

BH: Yes, I do tell them.

LS: You do tell them that.

BH: Yes.

LS: So that they have to be prepared to do that?

BH: Yeah.

LS: Okay. Umm, do you feel that people in the United States accept you? Do you ever feel that ---  
[inaudible response from BH] You don't feel accepted? Do people react --- they know you're from someplace else?

BH: ( ).

LS: But when you come in here and you have your customers , do they ask where you're from?

BH: Yes.

LS: Are they curious about Ethiopia? Do they ever say, "What's life like in Ethiopia?" They don't ask questions?

BH: Yeah, ( ). If somebody ask, I am going to tell her.

LS: Yeah.

BH: ( ).

LS: But when you walk down the street, do you feel that people can tell you're from someplace else?

BH: No.

LS: They can't?

BH: No.

LS: They can't? They just look at you and think you're American?

BH: Yeah.

LS: So do you feel that people accept you here? Do you understand what I mean? Do you feel that people will say, "Oh, okay, you're somebody else and they can be part of society"? Do you feel like that you are part of American society and that people are welcoming?

BH: Yeah!

LS: You feel like people are welcoming

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: So you never feel that people are against immigrants?

BH: No.

LS: Okay. I have one more question. And that is: we will have an exhibit, like in a museum exhibit ---

BH: No ---

LS: On African immigrants ---

BH: No, I ---

LS: No, well --- out of this project we will have an exhibit.

BH: Okay.

LS: And there will be pictures, there'll be photographs of African immigrants doing different things and a lot of people will see it, just in Philadelphia. Is there anything that you think that Americans should know what it is like to be an African immigrant?

BH: Can you say the question?

LS: Is there anything that you think --- when somebody comes to this museum and they see pictures of African immigrants here and they're working and there are homes and there are churches. Is there anything you would like an American to know about what it's like to come from Africa and live here?

BH: Yeah, but I didn't go there museum.

LS: No, it has not happened yet. Because I am going to be preparing this exhibit.

BH: Okay.

LS: But in preparing this, we are trying to arrange it such Americans who come and see it will understand what it's like to be an immigrant from Africa.

BH: Yeah.

LS: Is there anything that *you* think that Americans should understand about what it is like to leave Ethiopia ---

BH: Oh, okay ---

LS: --- and come here and ---

BH: Umm-hmm.

LS: Do you understand what I'm asking?

BH: Yes.

LS: Is there anything you would like Americans to know about what it's like to leave your country and come here?

BH: [Pause] No. I don't know.

LS: You don't know?

BH: No.

LS: Okay. Okay. That's it. Thank you. **[END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1]**