

For **Gloria**, although immigrating from Brazil was not easy, it did represent a new beginning upon which to build a new life for herself. She recalls, ***“Because of corruption and violence, life was not very safe and easy. But it was hard because I also left behind many good things, many good memories.”***

Upon arrival she quickly found work as a house cleaner.

However, communicating clearly was a barrier in those first years in America. Gloria remembers the faces of people when she tried to speak English:

“They looked at me with eyes a little opened, surprised, their faces changed. I would then say, ‘What’s wrong?’ ”

After attending ESOL classes at Gardner Pilot Academy’s Adult ESOL Program in Allston, Gloria built the English skills, as well as the confidence, needed to speak clearly without worrying about being understood. While she feels freer to express herself, perhaps more importantly, now she feels safer.

“I can feel safe here. It’s amazing. To me, America symbolizes respect and security.”