

## *Airport*

We started our long trip by taking a small plane to an international airport. So, we left from California and went to Brazil. It was just the beginning of a choice that I didn't make. Really was a classic example of being under-age and under-powered. That's how I- and millions of other youngsters out there- roll through these challenging years. My state of mind wasn't the way I would like it to be. My thoughts were about myself and how I felt about my mom's plan. There was no way out for me, but she made a few compromises.

Mother is very determined, especially when she wants to see her family and to expose me to her culture. She was born and raised In Brazil. So we are going there again. For years she had this fixation that I needed to return to see my extended family once more right after high school graduation. No questions asked, she took charge and kept moving with the plans. There wasn't much I could do but follow her, hoping for the best and for some space on and off. However, I did try to show her that it wasn't the best time for me to be traveling.

Of course, my high school graduation events would be over by the time we left on the trip. However I knew people would have parties afterwards and even into the summer. I made sure Mom knew that. No need to rush out of the country. I wanted more time to have fun with my friends. They didn't have any big, long plans as she had for me. My wish was to hang out with them until we split to go to college. In a few months we would all be apart. Everyone was taking different paths. That by itself was an enormous change. But no, I was going to be away for a month surrounded by relatives. Jumping from one situation into another so quickly was unsettling.

The season was not right either. Since the United States and Brazil are in different hemispheres, the seasons are inverted. This lesson I learned very early on, going back and forth at different times of the year. Where we live in the San Francisco Bay Area the weather is usually mild, but a bit chilly in the winter. During these months, a vacation in a warm spot where you can land your feet on the sand, and appreciate the breeze and palm trees sounds great. The problem was that the trip was going to be in summer, great months of the year, and I wanted to be home to enjoy it. Such reason didn't slow Mother down. She said she would make it up to me. Also, she reminded me that even though it was winter in Brazil, our base in the central region is usually as comfortable as our summer.

Another aspect not taken in consideration was the technological disadvantages I would face. Embarking in an international flight meant that for a while my iPhone would turn into a useless piece of metal. No one offered to upgrade my wireless for use abroad. It wasn't cool to be stripped down to basics, dependent on other devices for online access. As a result, my motivation to travel became even lower. Cut off from your friends for a month! The more I thought about it, the more upset I felt. It was difficult to be in a better mood. Also, venturing into a world I felt I didn't belong to didn't help improve it.

## In Between: one teen, two cultures

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Many times over I have been told “they are your family too.” Sure, there is blood connection with relatives in Brazil, but it isn’t that simple. Mother takes family very seriously. Her explanation is that “family is like having an umbilical cord that is never completely separated. Actually it continues with you no matter how old you are, where you go or how long you stay away.” Trust me, I have heard such comments many times all along my still young life. So, I am dragged towards my Mother’s family. She complicates my life.

After everything was set, we were on our way. We took three flights, including one overnight. This was really the best scenario. In previous trips we had even more connections. Better forget those. Obviously nobody enjoys lounging in airports, taking too long to get to their final stop. Pretty normal, I think. In my case, I wished for an uneventful transition and on-time flights. My thought was simple: Let me get to my destination, do my time there, and get back to my home. I believed it was just fair.

Right then I was tense, wishing for the time to go by fast. Stuck in the airport with Mother- and bound to leave much of what I valued behind- justified my annoyance. No matter how I looked at the situation it seemed upsetting. I had to do what others wanted me to do. Of course my mother isn’t mean. She just falls short of understanding me. Especially at that time we didn’t have much to share. Sitting side by side and sometimes face to face, we just didn’t talk much besides the necessary stuff. It felt like I was badly in need of empathy which I wasn’t getting from her.

Mother heard my protests, but evidently they didn’t make a difference. If they had we wouldn’t have been on the way to her country. She usually sees my way and I do try to see hers. However, she dominates, being totally in command of the situation. This makes me mad. Sometimes I overreact, like a lot of teens do. Sitting there, my anxiety was increasing. Having lots of time to spare, I started losing bits of my control. We had barely left- considering how long the trip was going to take- and I sensed myself turning a bit delusional. Most likely I was just tired of thinking about the whole thing. My thoughts were going around and around. Perhaps my condition would improve by the time we landed on the other side of the Equator.

We still had a lot ahead of us once we left the States and even still more after arriving in Brazil. It was clear that I was going there for the last time for a while. Who knew how long it would take until I went back again. Right then it didn’t really matter. Nothing was really new. It was one of the many times we had made this trip. A crucial difference was that I was older, more aware of what was expected of me and its’ meaning. So much was in my mind as we returned to be with those who I resisted letting know me. I never felt prepared.