

## Handout # 2 (Lesson # 2): Lidia B interviews Iraj B, Iran

My dad, Iraj Bighash, was born in the town of Abadan, Iran—a picturesque coastal town situated on the edge of the Persian Gulf. "It's a beautiful country," he commented. "Our house was right on the Gulf and I used to sit there all the time, dreaming about the world." He also remembers encountering many Arabs while in Abadan, as the town is near the border between Iraq and Iran.

Bighash immigrated to the United States in 1975 at the age of eighteen, arriving at the port of entry in New York. He initially came to the United States because education opportunities in Iran are extremely limited and he wanted the freedom to pursue what he loved rather than what the government chose for him. Additionally, he desired the freedom and opportunity to prosper and learn about the world. His first impression of the United States was that of surprise. "When I arrived in Houston, Texas, I was surprised that not many people were walking along the streets—most people were driving," he said. "In Iran people walk everywhere and the streets are constantly flooded with people."

Furthermore, Bighash said he was pleased to see how clean and beautiful the streets were, compared to Iran. "I thought the United States would be a different world," stated Bighash. "I always pictured romanticism and a completely different way of life when thinking about the United States as a little boy. But it turned out that this country was more similar to my life back home and to reality." Moreover, Bighash encountered several initial challenges as a newly arrived immigrant. He had to learn English quickly, as he was not fluent when he arrived. He also had to live with very little money.

"Keeping a job and being on my own in everything was the hardest thing," Bighash said. "Getting to know the customs and getting over my homesickness was also challenging." Overall, Bighash was treated very well as an immigrant. He noticed the friendly and caring atmosphere immediately. However, he did experience discrimination during the hostage crisis—some insulted him and others threatened him during this period.

Bighash contains an optimistic view of the American political institution, saying that the system is very good because people can freely express their opinions. "Freedom of choice, the friendliness of the people, the opportunity, all of it is great," said Bighash. "People generally do not bother you here, which is the most important thing."

Bighash believes that immigrating to the United States was and still is incredibly rewarding to him. "I have achieved the 'American Dream.' I did not have anything, and now I have everything...I have cultured well, I have a successful job, and I have seen the world.

Source: Library of Congress: *Interviews with Today's Immigrants*

[<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/interv/interviews.php?immigid=54&region=Asia,%20Middle%20East>]