

**Interview with Valeriia Beheida on April 18, 2023**

0:00:03.000,0:00:06.000

Good afternoon, Valeriia. It's so nice to see you.

0:00:06.000,0:00:07.000

Good afternoon.

0:00:08.000,0:00:09.000

How are you today?

0:00:09.000,0:00:10.000

I'm good.

0:00:10.000,0:00:12.000

Good! So glad to hear that.

0:00:12.600,0:00:19.530

I'm going to begin with an introduction of you, and of the project, and I'll start with

0:00:19.530,0:00:22.578

a short biography about you, okay?

0:00:22.578,0:00:27.455

So today is Tuesday, April 18th, 2023.

0:00:28.440,0:00:32.409

Valeriia Beheida is originally from Chernivtsi, Ukraine.

0:00:32.409,0:00:36.540

She moved to the United States one year ago, in April of 2022,

0:00:36.540,0:00:39.852

and now lives with her family in Potomac, Maryland.

0:00:39.852,0:00:42.319

She speaks Ukrainian and English.

0:00:42.319,0:00:46.471

She's been a student at Montgomery College since January of this year.

0:00:46.471,0:00:52.790

She is majoring in business and in her spare time she enjoys art, photography, and singing.

0:00:52.790,0:00:55.106

So welcome, Valeriia.

0:00:55.106,0:01:00.941

My name, as you already know, but I will say this so that anyone watching this video knows.

0:01:00.941,0:01:08.045

My name is Heather Bruce Satrom, and I teach in ELAP, English Language for Academic Purposes, at Montgomery College.

0:01:08.045,0:01:16.325

This project is called History in the Making: Documenting Stories of Immigrants and Refugee Students at Montgomery College.

0:01:16.325,0:01:20.097

The goal is to help others better understand the experiences

0:01:20.097,0:01:23.930

of immigrants and refugees in the United States.

0:01:23.930,0:01:28.027

Telling your story will enable others to better understand the challenges

0:01:28.027,0:01:34.491

that immigrants and refugees face and to better appreciate the resilience and persistence of people in your community.

0:01:34.491,0:01:39.531

And so, I'm so grateful for your participation. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today.

0:01:40.520,0:01:41.384  
Thank you.

0:01:41.384,0:01:44.247  
You had a chance to read the questions in advance.

0:01:44.247,0:01:47.000  
But please note that all of these questions are optional.

0:01:47.000,0:01:51.763  
If you don't want to answer a question just say I'd like to skip that, that's fine.

0:01:51.763,0:01:54.965  
If you need a break at any point, that's also fine, too,

0:01:54.965,0:01:58.101  
and we'll talk for about an hour today.

0:01:58.101,0:02:01.729  
So let's begin with, could you tell me your full name, please?

0:02:02.720,0:02:05.604  
My full name is Valeriia Beheida, and

0:02:05.604,0:02:06.104  
the spelling is;

0:02:06.104,0:02:09.908  
v, a, l, e, r, i, i, a

0:02:09.908,0:02:12.202  
b, e, h, e, i, d, a

0:02:12.202,0:02:15.667  
Thank you, and do I have permission to record this interview?

0:02:15.667,0:02:16.438  
Sure!

0:02:16.438,0:02:17.047  
Thank you.

0:02:17.047,0:02:19.130  
Alright, so tell me a little bit about

0:02:21.120,0:02:22.775  
when and where you were born.

0:02:22.775,0:02:26.077  
I was born on 15th of October,

0:02:26.077,0:02:28.697  
October in 2004,

0:02:28.697,0:02:34.553  
in the city on the west of the Ukraine which is called, Chernivtsi.

0:02:34.553,0:02:41.771  
It is a beautiful city which is known for its architecture, and some people call it also "small Paris,"

0:02:41.771,0:02:47.214  
because it has this beautiful, cozy atmosphere and ancient architecture.

0:02:51.200,0:02:57.667  
Can you tell me a little bit more about the city where you grew up in? What you enjoyed doing when you lived there?

0:02:57.667,0:02:59.587  
What it looks like, a little bit more?

0:03:00.560,0:03:01.729  
So,

0:03:01.729,0:03:07.517  
I guess it's like a small city, I would say, and everyone knows each other.

0:03:07.517,0:03:16.265  
And if not anyone knows each other, then we know someone that know this person, so it's like..

0:03:16.265,0:03:20.017  
someone.. everyone is being in connection,

0:03:20.017,0:03:25.037  
and the atmosphere is so friendly, and

0:03:25.037,0:03:27.994  
I guess I like the architecture most,

0:03:29.960,0:03:30.824  
and

0:03:30.824,0:03:33.969  
it actually reminds me of Vienna,

0:03:33.969,0:03:36.597  
which is in Austria,

0:03:36.597,0:03:38.964  
for its architecture, and

0:03:38.964,0:03:41.999  
I just like walking there and

0:03:41.999,0:03:46.000  
just hanging out with my friends, and family.

0:03:47.000,0:03:50.000  
It's just, my safe place.

0:03:50.000,0:03:55.000  
It sounds like a beautiful place. Can you tell me a little bit about the home that you grew up in?

0:03:55.000,0:03:59.000  
Did you live right in the city? Did you live in an apartment building or a house?

0:03:59.000,0:04:00.000  
Tell me a little bit about that.

0:04:00.000,0:04:05.374  
So I grew up in the apartment, and I lived in the city center,

0:04:05.374,0:04:07.139  
and..

0:04:09.120,0:04:14.570  
my apartment is not that big, but everyone has their own room,

0:04:14.570,0:04:17.317  
and my room is entirely beige,

0:04:18.280,0:04:25.077  
and has wardrobe, big windows. It's my favorite part of my room,

0:04:25.077,0:04:31.165  
because I was staring at the window and I have this beautiful tree

0:04:31.165,0:04:35.542

outside my window, and when it's getting..

0:04:36.000,0:04:37.020  
When it's fall,

0:04:38.000,0:04:40.281  
and the fall leaves,

0:04:40.281,0:04:41.993  
begin to grow, it's

0:04:41.993,0:04:44.694  
the best feeling, and,

0:04:44.694,0:04:46.126  
I guess

0:04:48.120,0:04:51.317  
the best part of my apartment is the

0:04:51.317,0:04:53.000  
artworks of

0:04:53.240,0:04:54.720  
Evgeniia Gapchinskaia,

0:04:54.720,0:05:01.331  
which is my mom's favorite artist, and we have lots of her artwork at home.

0:05:01.331,0:05:03.394  
Yeah..

0:05:03.394,0:05:09.480  
And also we have a terrace, which is also my favorite place in my apartment.

0:05:09.480,0:05:15.620  
I always liked just sitting there and looking at the nature.

0:05:16.600,0:05:19.418  
That sounds really beautiful. I imagine you miss that very much.

0:05:19.418,0:05:20.658  
Yeah.

0:05:20.658,0:05:24.470  
Has your city been directly impacted by the war?

0:05:25.440,0:05:27.723  
It wasn't directly impacted by..

0:05:28.720,0:05:31.717  
by the war, but still lots of

0:05:31.717,0:05:41.879  
men and women from my city joined the army, and lots of them died. So, I guess that's what..

0:05:44.840,0:05:47.556  
that's how it was impacted, and

0:05:47.556,0:05:54.592  
also almost every day there are air raid sirens. So it's

0:05:56.560,0:05:57.365  
hard to live there.

0:05:58.360,0:06:01.459  
And that's kind of tough.

0:06:01.459,0:06:06.442  
I can imagine. It sounds very, very difficult. Thank you so much for sharing that with me.

0:06:07.440,0:06:11.197

One thing you mentioned in an earlier conversation with me was

0:06:11.197,0:06:18.011

about your education and going to school with the same group of friends, for many years. Could you.. Could you describe that?

0:06:19.200,0:06:20.865

Yeah, that was actually,

0:06:22.840,0:06:26.316

I guess that was helpful, because we knew each other from the

0:06:26.316,0:06:28.919

five, six years old,

0:06:28.919,0:06:34.758

and we were all friends, so I guess that's the best feeling when you can

0:06:34.758,0:06:41.329

study and be around your friends. It's just easier to

0:06:41.329,0:06:48.198

perceive information while you're being in a friendly group.

0:06:48.198,0:06:55.844

So did you begin going to school with the same group, around age five, all the way through the end of high school?

0:06:55.844,0:06:56.591

Yeah.

0:06:56.591,0:07:01.946

Wow, so you got to know each other very, very well. How many people were in that core group?

0:07:03.920,0:07:15.001

So we started with the number of 35 people, but then it just got less, and we graduated from school, and there were

0:07:15.001,0:07:21.675

21 students in my class, but I guess

0:07:21.675,0:07:28.610

two less classes made us more

0:07:28.610,0:07:33.014

friendly, I guess. We became true friends,

0:07:33.014,0:07:36.747

I guess, till the end of our lives.

0:07:38.720,0:07:41.114

Are you still in touch with some of them through social media,

0:07:41.114,0:07:46.447

or WhatsApp? How do you communicate with your friends who are still in Ukraine?

0:07:46.447,0:07:53.819

We try to call each other by FaceTime or just texting in the Instagram.

0:07:54.800,0:07:58.462

But still it's not the real communication that we had.

0:07:59.440,0:08:02.932

No, it's not. It's different when it's virtual. I understand that.

0:08:02.932,0:08:06.845

Could you tell me a little bit about your family when you were growing up?

0:08:06.845,0:08:12.384

Who you lived with when you were a child and a teenager, and

0:08:12.384,0:08:14.934  
maybe just a little bit about your family?

0:08:14.934,0:08:21.703  
So my family consists of my mom, my dad, and my older brother.

0:08:21.703,0:08:24.825  
My mom is working as a

0:08:24.825,0:08:27.645  
teacher in the kindergarten

0:08:27.645,0:08:29.998  
with kids who have musculoskeletal diseases.

0:08:30.960,0:08:36.846  
And my dad is a private entrepreneur. He works for a Ukrainian firm..

0:08:38.840,0:08:41.485  
firm which is working with

0:08:41.485,0:08:45.221  
windows and solar windows.

0:08:45.221,0:08:49.188  
And my older brother is still studying.

0:08:50.160,0:08:52.590  
So he

0:08:52.590,0:08:55.851  
got his Master's degree in Law, and..

0:08:57.840,0:09:00.892  
not the law, but in economy, and now he's

0:09:03.880,0:09:10.338  
he's proceeding with his higher education, and he's trying to get his Bachelor's degree in Law.

0:09:11.320,0:09:15.937  
Is he still in Ukraine now, or is he here in the United States?

0:09:15.937,0:09:18.491  
Yeah my father, my

0:09:20.480,0:09:23.700  
brother, and my grandmother are still in Ukraine.

0:09:23.700,0:09:26.265  
And

0:09:26.265,0:09:29.318  
is your brother serving in the military right now?

0:09:31.280,0:09:32.184  
No, not yet.

0:09:33.160,0:09:37.961  
And so, when you came to the United States, did you come just with your mother?

0:09:37.961,0:09:38.596  
Yeah.

0:09:38.596,0:09:41.019  
Yeah, I imagine you miss your brother very much.

0:09:41.019,0:09:42.480  
Yeah.

0:09:43.480,0:09:47.665

I think a lot of people here in the United States are

0:09:48.640,0:09:50.901  
paying attention to what's happening in Ukraine.

0:09:52.880,0:09:59.080  
But it would be really helpful for people who want to learn more about that situation, if you could explain a little bit about

0:09:59.080,0:10:03.895  
the situation that was happening a year ago that

0:10:03.895,0:10:10.582  
made you and your mother decide to come to the United States. Can you tell me a little bit about what was happening at that time?

0:10:10.582,0:10:19.447  
So it started on the 24th of February in 2022, at around

0:10:19.447,0:10:22.694  
3 a.m. in the morning.

0:10:22.694,0:10:27.061  
And everyone was sleeping, and it just started, and

0:10:27.061,0:10:33.354  
some cities on Eastern Ukraine

0:10:33.354,0:10:35.555  
got impacted so much.

0:10:37.520,0:10:41.504  
And they were just bombed

0:10:41.504,0:10:43.348  
without any..

0:10:45.320,0:10:46.910  
Oh, that's tough!

0:10:46.910,0:10:51.669  
It's hard to talk about. I understand. I appreciate you sharing this with us.

0:10:51.669,0:10:58.148  
And Russian army got into those cities, and they were just

0:10:58.148,0:11:03.807  
abusing, raping and killing innocent people. So,

0:11:03.807,0:11:07.761  
that's why my mom decided that it would be safer for me

0:11:07.761,0:11:10.428  
somewhere else.

0:11:11.400,0:11:11.904

0:11:11.904,0:11:16.119  
Did you come through a refugee program?

0:11:16.119,0:11:21.073  
Or did you have family here? Or did you come as an international student? How did you

0:11:21.073,0:11:22.950  
make the journey here?

0:11:22.950,0:11:28.644  
So I actually thought that I'm going to go back soon to Ukraine,

0:11:28.644,0:11:30.802

that it's going to end soon,

0:11:30.802,0:11:32.484  
but

0:11:32.484,0:11:37.206  
it hasn't ended yet, and

0:11:37.206,0:11:43.417  
I got my travel visa, and then I got a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) here,

0:11:45.400,0:11:50.379  
but I didn't plan that I will stay here for that long.

0:11:50.379,0:11:55.222  
I just thought it's going to end soon.

0:11:55.222,0:11:59.400  
Do you have relatives here in Maryland, like extended family?

0:11:59.400,0:12:05.477  
Yeah, I have here my aunt, uncle, and my cousins

0:12:05.477,0:12:08.604  
and they have American Citizenship.

0:12:11.600,0:12:14.804  
So, they just hosted us here.

0:12:16.800,0:12:20.222  
And I know you said that you had planned just to come for a short amount of time,

0:12:20.222,0:12:23.253  
and then go back to your home country, but

0:12:23.253,0:12:25.627  
that did not happen.. that hasn't happened yet.

0:12:25.627,0:12:30.012  
So you had graduated from high school in Ukraine, and were..

0:12:30.012,0:12:34.653  
Were you about to start your college studies, there, your University studies in Ukraine?

0:12:35.640,0:12:39.868  
I started my first year in the University of Ukraine,

0:12:39.868,0:12:44.764  
at the Department of Foreign Languages, and my specialty was

0:12:44.764,0:12:49.284  
English Literature, and English Language, and

0:12:49.284,0:12:52.420  
Other Foreign Language,

0:12:52.420,0:12:52.920  
and

0:12:54.920,0:12:56.493  
I finished my first year,

0:12:56.493,0:13:03.235  
We started offline but then when the war started, we had a little break,

0:13:03.235,0:13:08.115  
and then we proceeded with online education.

0:13:09.080,0:13:16.964  
It must have been very frustrating to start your program and then have to end to come here and then to think about okay, "now, what? what do I do now?"

0:13:16.964,0:13:22.359

I think it's interesting that you studied English literature.

0:13:23.320,0:13:25.701

Did that also include American literature?

0:13:25.701,0:13:26.701

Or you focused more

0:13:26.701,0:13:33.243

on British literature?

-We actually were focusing on Any literature. But it was

0:13:33.243,0:13:38.464

kind of complicated because we were studying

0:13:38.464,0:13:43.565

not only English literature, but Ukrainian literature in English translation.

0:13:43.565,0:13:47.989

-Interesting!

-And foreign translation, so that was tough.

0:13:47.989,0:13:48.489

0:13:48.489,0:13:50.616

Could you.. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

0:13:50.616,0:14:03.113

Yeah, yeah, that was just kind of complicated, but we didn't really start studying, only American or only British literature.

0:14:03.113,0:14:12.282

Are there any writers that are particularly important to you? Or any books that are particularly meaningful to you that you want to talk about?

0:14:12.282,0:14:17.273

I guess..

0:14:17.273,0:14:21.897

That's a tough question. I actually like to read, but

0:14:21.897,0:14:24.291

I don't think that there is

0:14:24.291,0:14:27.557

a favorite book, or something like that.

0:14:27.557,0:14:33.945

Is there a Ukrainian writer that you would recommend to American readers?

0:14:33.945,0:14:36.768

A writer that's important to you that you think,

0:14:36.768,0:14:42.189

maybe Americans should read books by this author to better understand Ukrainians?

0:14:44.160,0:14:45.905

I guess..

0:14:45.905,0:14:48.684

Lesya Ukrainka,

0:14:48.684,0:14:51.630

and also

0:14:51.630,0:14:56.619

actually, Taras Shevchenko, is classics, so

0:14:56.619,0:14:59.604  
I don't think that everyone should read it,

0:14:59.604,0:15:04.301  
but still, it's important to know some of his

0:15:04.301,0:15:08.644  
work. So..

0:15:08.644,0:15:11.637  
yeah, works, I guess.

0:15:11.637,0:15:21.692  
Well, I will try to include links to the writers you mentioned, and to the artist that you mentioned as well, who's works are in your home in Ukraine, so that people can see those.

0:15:21.692,0:15:25.281  
So, you eventually

0:15:25.281,0:15:28.226  
heard about Montgomery College and decided to enroll.

0:15:28.226,0:15:31.296  
How did you hear about Montgomery College?

0:15:31.296,0:15:35.187  
My aunt was actually studying there.

0:15:35.187,0:15:39.002  
Oh, maybe 20 years ago. But still

0:15:39.002,0:15:43.944  
she recommended me that I should go there just..

0:15:43.944,0:15:44.444  
just to try it.

0:15:44.444,0:15:49.120  
It's just the experience. So I wouldn't waste my time,

0:15:49.120,0:15:57.850  
and I would try something new. And American education is clearly better than Ukrainian, I guess.

0:15:57.850,0:16:01.170  
That's interesting.

0:16:01.170,0:16:03.022  
I guess it's just the experience.

0:16:03.022,0:16:07.684  
When you say it's better, could you explain the differences that you've noticed? I'm curious about that.

0:16:07.684,0:16:13.427  
I guess it's just the level of education.

0:16:13.427,0:16:16.888  
In Ukraine it's also great, but

0:16:16.888,0:16:25.770  
here it's more students-oriented, I guess.

0:16:25.770,0:16:31.417  
Oh, that's interesting. Can you say more about that, how you felt like it's student oriented?

0:16:31.417,0:16:38.496  
I guess, everyone.. here it's also communal learning, but

0:16:38.496,0:16:44.876  
students,

0:16:44.876,0:16:50.952  
can perceive the information

0:16:50.952,0:16:57.556  
by themselves and in class as well. And if you ask the professor they would always help.

0:16:57.556,0:17:00.108  
And yes,

0:17:00.108,0:17:03.591  
that's the difference. In Ukraine, it's

0:17:03.591,0:17:05.299  
not always like that.

0:17:05.299,0:17:07.193  
However,

0:17:07.193,0:17:10.012  
some of the professors,

0:17:10.012,0:17:13.228  
also help a lot, but not all of them.

0:17:13.228,0:17:18.771  
I'm glad you're having a positive learning experience at MC. I understand that you're in

0:17:18.771,0:17:28.358  
Professor Alicia Sanderman's ELAI 990 class. That's the capstone course in the English Language Program. So you're placed into the highest level, congratulations!

0:17:28.358,0:17:38.185  
How.. Are you taking other classes at the same time, or are you just focusing on that capstone course which I know has a lot of work in it? Because I also teach that class.

0:17:38.185,0:17:40.825  
For now I only..

0:17:40.825,0:17:43.411  
Sorry about that.

0:17:43.880,0:17:44.400  
That's okay.

0:17:44.400,0:17:47.800  
Yeah, for now it's only this class,

0:17:47.800,0:17:51.633  
but I'm planning to take

0:17:51.633,0:17:57.112  
other classes in the summer and more classes in the fall semester.

0:17:57.112,0:18:01.662  
And are you planning to major in business, is that right?

0:18:03.640,0:18:07.355  
I haven't decided, yet, but I guess, business.

0:18:07.355,0:18:10.491  
Okay, you have time to figure it out.

0:18:10.491,0:18:18.951  
Can you tell me a little bit about what you've learned in your capstone course in ELAP? I know you've already studied English for a long time,

0:18:18.951,0:18:23.982  
but, what are you learning in the class that's been helpful, or interesting, or useful to you?

0:18:23.982,0:18:27.111  
So when I was in Ukraine. I thought that I..

0:18:27.111,0:18:29.689  
I can write

0:18:29.689,0:18:32.398  
essays flawless,

0:18:32.398,0:18:32.898  
perfect.

0:18:32.898,0:18:35.687  
But when I came here, I

0:18:35.687,0:18:41.541  
figured out that it's not that perfect, and I need to focus on that more.

0:18:41.541,0:18:46.416  
And that's helpful that we write essays

0:18:46.416,0:18:47.771  
almost every class,

0:18:47.771,0:18:52.814  
and a lot of good vocabulary,

0:18:52.814,0:18:55.018  
I guess that's helpful.

0:18:55.018,0:19:04.050  
I think that is a very common reaction to a lot of students. That they studied English for a long time, and then they come here, and they're thinking, "oh, my gosh! They still have

0:19:04.050,0:19:07.237  
more to learn about.. especially about writing academic English."

0:19:07.237,0:19:07.737  
It's very challenging.

0:19:07.737,0:19:13.304  
Do you ever go to the Writing Center, or use any resources,

0:19:13.304,0:19:18.375  
the library, anything like that at MC? What has been useful to you and your learning?

0:19:18.375,0:19:23.295  
So I've been visiting online Writing Center,

0:19:23.295,0:19:27.010  
and it was actually really helpful, because

0:19:27.010,0:19:30.937  
I was not sure about my mistakes,

0:19:30.937,0:19:34.313  
and they helped me to

0:19:34.313,0:19:36.847  
find out what are my

0:19:36.847,0:19:39.688  
patterns that I keep making,

0:19:39.688,0:19:43.311  
and I guess that was helpful.

0:19:43.311,0:19:45.574  
So I can just

0:19:45.574,0:19:49.331  
solve all my mistakes and do better on final exams.

0:19:49.331,0:19:52.589

I'm glad that's been a helpful resource for you.

0:19:52.589,0:20:00.937

Have you gotten involved with any.. Now I know you're new to MC and new to the area, but I'm curious, if you have become involved with any activities

0:20:00.937,0:20:05.943

with student life on campus? or if you've joined any student clubs

0:20:05.943,0:20:09.130

or gotten involved in any way with student life?

0:20:09.130,0:20:12.943

Not yet, but I will, in the future.

0:20:12.943,0:20:18.300

So I have almost two years

0:20:18.300,0:20:21.275

here, so I guess I will do that.

0:20:21.275,0:20:26.950

Have you made some friendships in your capstone course in the ELAI 990?

0:20:26.950,0:20:29.660

Yes, I have two friends,

0:20:29.660,0:20:33.768

one is from India, and one is from Mongolia.

0:20:33.768,0:20:44.715

And I guess that's helpful that we can share our traditions and share our cultures in this class.

0:20:44.715,0:20:53.025

I think that's one of the things that makes MC really special is that we have the opportunity to meet people from all over the world,

0:20:53.025,0:21:01.035

especially in the ELAP program. So I think that's really exciting that you now have friendships with people from other places.

0:21:01.035,0:21:05.414

Is it hard to meet American people, sometimes students, tell me that it's hard to

0:21:05.414,0:21:08.825

have friendships with American people. Have you found that?

0:21:08.825,0:21:17.287

I haven't found any friends that are American,

0:21:17.287,0:21:20.657

but I guess it's not that hard.

0:21:20.657,0:21:24.573

It's just the difference in the cultures. So..

0:21:24.573,0:21:29.238

It's hard to find something in common. It's not

0:21:29.238,0:21:31.255

that it's hard to find someone.

0:21:31.255,0:21:38.728

Sometimes my students will say to me, "oh, American people are so busy, they don't have time

0:21:38.728,0:21:39.228

for friendships."

0:21:39.228,0:21:46.931

And sometimes they say that we're very private people. I don't know if you've.. have you found that to be the case?

0:21:46.931,0:21:53.598

Yeah, I guess so. It's just like that. Americans are so hard working,

0:21:53.598,0:21:55.949

and they work all the time. So,

0:21:55.949,0:21:57.722

it's kind of hard to find

0:21:57.722,0:22:00.968

free time to hang out

0:22:00.968,0:22:03.426

with friends or go somewhere.

0:22:03.426,0:22:13.593

I think a lot of students have that experience, and it is so important, I think, when you're trying to establish a friendship or maintain a friendship, to carve out that time.

0:22:13.593,0:22:14.093

So,

0:22:14.093,0:22:23.441

That's interesting. You mentioned that in your class you have the chance to learn about each other's culture. And so, I would love to ask you a little bit about Ukrainian culture.

0:22:23.441,0:22:26.537

One thing that you mentioned to me that

0:22:26.537,0:22:28.274

is important to you

0:22:28.274,0:22:30.849

is celebrating

0:22:30.849,0:22:33.963

Easter, and I understand the Orthodox Ukrainian Church

0:22:33.963,0:22:37.057

celebrated Easter this past Sunday,

0:22:37.057,0:22:39.990

and you mentioned that there are some

0:22:39.990,0:22:45.136

traditions associated with that. I would love for you to share a little bit, if you could, about

0:22:45.136,0:22:47.855

Easter and traditions that are important to you.

0:22:47.855,0:22:52.995

So I guess it's kind of a tradition to go,

0:22:52.995,0:22:55.532

each Easter to the church,

0:22:55.532,0:23:00.952

and so we need to bless our baskets, and we

0:23:00.952,0:23:03.839

typically put

0:23:03.839,0:23:06.172

Easter cakes and

0:23:06.172,0:23:13.858

Easter eggs, and we call them "krashanky" or "pysanky."

0:23:13.858,0:23:17.580  
They just where I.. the "krashanky," are

0:23:17.580,0:23:21.420  
just Easter eggs that are

0:23:21.420,0:23:24.621  
colored, and

0:23:24.621,0:23:29.257  
"Pysanky" are Easter eggs with ornaments,

0:23:29.257,0:23:34.227  
and they symbolize vows, or

0:23:34.227,0:23:39.177  
good health, or something like that.

0:23:39.177,0:23:43.226  
And it's different in every region in Ukraine.

0:23:43.226,0:23:50.591  
And also we put some vegetables, or something like that,

0:23:50.591,0:23:55.628  
and we just go there to the church, and we need to bless them.

0:23:55.628,0:23:59.420  
And after that we have Easter..

0:23:59.420,0:24:09.713  
I will say lunch, because we wait a lot of time in the church. So that our baskets will be blessed, and

0:24:09.713,0:24:12.843  
after that, I guess..

0:24:12.843,0:24:16.027  
Oh, and after that we have egg fight.

0:24:16.027,0:24:18.246  
And so..

0:24:18.246,0:24:19.000  
You have an egg fight?

0:24:19.000,0:24:20.000  
Yeah!

0:24:20.720,0:24:21.220  
Oh, that's fun!

0:24:21.220,0:24:29.151  
Is there.. I'm familiar with this tradition in the Mexican community, where there's confetti put inside of the egg. Is it a similar idea, or you?

0:24:29.151,0:24:32.039  
Oh, it's a boiled egg,

0:24:32.039,0:24:36.997  
with ornaments or just colored eggs, and we need to fight with them.

0:24:36.997,0:24:38.529  
And so who wins..

0:24:38.529,0:24:40.909  
and this person will be..

0:24:40.909,0:24:41.409  
Will be

0:24:41.409,0:24:45.244  
a good year for this person.

0:24:45.244,0:24:48.448  
That sounds like a lot of fun.

0:24:48.448,0:24:51.633  
Do you have any eggs that you could..

0:24:51.633,0:24:54.223  
near you, that you've decorated, that you could show?

0:24:54.223,0:24:57.962  
Oh I actually got some photos of them

0:24:57.962,0:24:58.954  
Oh good!

0:24:58.954,0:25:02.686  
We didn't really decorate them, but we..

0:25:02.686,0:25:06.175  
This year we just colored them in

0:25:06.175,0:25:10.953  
yellow and blue, as the Ukrainian flag.

0:25:10.953,0:25:11.871  
For the Ukrainian colors.

0:25:11.871,0:25:15.932  
Yeah.

0:25:15.932,0:25:20.695  
So it was just, I guess, appropriate this year and last year.

0:25:20.695,0:25:24.882  
And also that's how

0:25:24.882,0:25:27.126  
the baskets look like.

0:25:27.126,0:25:29.157  
Oh, lovely, lovely!

0:25:29.157,0:25:36.058  
And maybe you can send me those photos, and then I'll put them up on the website later.

0:25:36.058,0:25:41.816  
I think you also mentioned there are certain foods that are associated

0:25:41.816,0:25:45.772  
with Easter. There was.. was it Babka? Is that what you were talking about?

0:25:45.772,0:25:51.699  
And it's an Easter cake, which is..

0:25:51.699,0:25:58.698  
it is made with different.. like raisins and different toppings, and we..

0:25:58.698,0:26:04.311  
You can add anything that you want,

0:26:04.311,0:26:06.233  
but it has to

0:26:06.233,0:26:09.778  
have, you know, this

0:26:09.778,0:26:15.167  
white top, and that's like a tradition.

0:26:15.167,0:26:20.196  
I guess everyone likes the top of this cake.

0:26:20.196,0:26:23.621  
Do you have a picture of that or no?

0:26:23.621,0:26:27.513  
Oh, we didn't do this..

0:26:27.513,0:26:34.419  
This year, but I will try to find it, so I can show you from last year.

0:26:34.419,0:26:40.436  
Okay, that would be great. Typically, is that something that you would make at home with your family before Easter?

0:26:40.436,0:26:44.245  
We tried to do it with my mom, and also

0:26:44.245,0:26:46.986  
I do it almost

0:26:46.986,0:26:48.757  
every year with my grandma.

0:26:48.757,0:26:50.435  
It's nice.

0:26:50.435,0:26:53.402  
But it's

0:26:53.402,0:26:56.079  
not the same this year.

0:26:56.079,0:26:58.041  
Not the same, I know, I'm sorry.

0:26:58.041,0:27:04.627  
So did you find a Ukrainian church here, where you have a community of Ukrainians?

0:27:04.627,0:27:06.264  
And can you tell me a little bit about that?

0:27:06.264,0:27:10.832  
Oh, we found..

0:27:10.832,0:27:14.989  
Actually on Easter, we go to another church,

0:27:14.989,0:27:22.864  
because of.. I don't know, it's like a tradition in this family. So we go to the same church.

0:27:22.864,0:27:25.775  
And

0:27:25.775,0:27:29.483  
we actually found a community in

0:27:29.483,0:27:31.888  
Saint Andrew Church,

0:27:31.888,0:27:34.625  
which is also in Silver Spring.

0:27:34.625,0:27:37.849  
And so..

0:27:37.849,0:27:43.940  
I guess, everyone there is just friendly, and there are a lot of refugees from Ukraine.

0:27:43.940,0:27:48.728  
It's just helpful to be around them,

0:27:48.728,0:27:51.006  
because they understand

0:27:51.006,0:27:55.674  
the feeling of being just so far away from home.

0:27:55.674,0:28:00.582  
It's so important to find a community, absolutely.

0:28:00.582,0:28:01.082  
Yeah!

0:28:04.080,0:28:12.065  
And also I'm going to be painting some of the cutting boards for the event on the 13th of May,

0:28:12.840,0:28:19.147  
and to sell them and to send some money for the Ukrainian army.

0:28:19.147,0:28:22.132  
Could you.. Do you have one that you could hold up and show on camera?

0:28:24.120,0:28:27.435  
Oh, that's really beautiful!

0:28:27.435,0:28:29.182  
That's lovely!

0:28:29.182,0:28:33.538  
It's a Ukrainian ornament, which is called Petrykivka,

0:28:33.538,0:28:43.613  
and I just want to keep it simple and Ukrainian, I don't know. To just cherish traditions, I guess.

0:28:44.600,0:28:49.483  
Would you say that your religious faith is helpful to you,

0:28:49.483,0:28:57.047  
coping with loneliness or with sadness, that you feel, related to being in a different place?

0:28:59.674,0:29:00.741  
I guess so,

0:29:00.741,0:29:02.240  
but I..

0:29:03.240,0:29:07.398  
I guess my artwork helps me more.

0:29:07.398,0:29:08.998  
Helps me more.

0:29:08.998,0:29:15.076  
You mentioned that you really enjoy painting and taking photographs, especially photographs in nature.

0:29:15.076,0:29:15.576

0:29:15.576,0:29:21.688  
Do you have any pieces of art that you could share on camera with us, and tell us a little bit about that?

0:29:21.688,0:29:35.531  
Yeah, so I actually experiment a lot with structures and I like to add some materials that are not connected with the painting.

0:29:35.531,0:29:38.823

So that is the artwork.

0:29:38.823,0:29:41.000  
Oh, that's lovely!

0:29:41.170,0:29:42.400  
So these are ballet dancers?

0:29:42.880,0:29:43.417  
Yeah!

0:29:44.400,0:29:46.803  
Tell me a little bit more about this. Did you..

0:29:46.803,0:29:50.151  
It's hard to see.. So you painted it, and then you also..

0:29:50.151,0:29:50.651  
are there..

0:29:50.651,0:30:03.195  
Yeah, I added some of the fragments from the Ukrainian articles, and they are dated back in the 1950s.

0:30:03.195,0:30:11.562  
And it's kind of controversial, because it's like a

0:30:11.562,0:30:18.582  
swan lake, and it's basically.. it's

0:30:18.582,0:30:22.584  
more a Russian tradition.

0:30:22.584,0:30:29.787  
I don't know. They.. all their ballet dancers are in the swan lake,

0:30:29.787,0:30:39.785  
but, I added some fragments from the Ukrainian articles, so it's kind of controversial, but I like it.

0:30:39.785,0:30:41.339  
Can you hold it up again, one more time?

0:30:41.339,0:30:46.382  
Yeah. And I also added some

0:30:46.382,0:30:48.875  
of the fur..

0:30:48.875,0:30:54.268  
Oh, the feathers! It's really beautiful! When did you make this piece of art?

0:30:54.268,0:31:02.826  
Maybe two months ago, and I also made one more.

0:31:02.826,0:31:07.599  
But it's not quite really related to anything.

0:31:07.599,0:31:10.803  
I just wanted to try something.

0:31:10.803,0:31:11.897  
Those are beautiful avocados.

0:31:11.897,0:31:13.201  
Yeah!

0:31:13.201,0:31:18.069  
Tell me a little bit about that artwork. What were you..

0:31:18.069,0:31:23.822

What emotions were you feeling when you painted it, or what were you trying to express?

0:31:23.822,0:31:28.412

Was it just about the beauty of the fruit, or is it related to something else?

0:31:28.412,0:31:41.587

I guess, I was just trying to concentrate on something, except the war, so I was trying to find a little bit of peace,

0:31:41.587,0:31:45.754

and I decided to paint.

0:31:45.754,0:31:50.334

That's really relaxing, and I like avocado, so

0:31:50.334,0:31:50.995

that was,

0:31:50.995,0:31:53.003

I mean..

0:31:53.003,0:32:09.526

I think finding a creative activity to distract you sounds like a helpful way to cope with the emotions that I'm sure you're feeling about being far from home.

0:32:09.526,0:32:11.953

Do you have any other pieces of art that you want to share?

0:32:11.953,0:32:14.849

Oh, yeah!

0:32:14.849,0:32:17.564

This one is my latest work.

0:32:17.564,0:32:19.040

Oh, so beautiful! Tell me about this!

0:32:19.040,0:32:22.478

It's a portrait of my friend,

0:32:22.478,0:32:27.514

and it.. the reference was actually my photography work.

0:32:27.514,0:32:30.254

I can show you this right now, one second.

0:32:39.240,0:32:43.742

Oh, my goodness! Can you hold both up at the same time? Is that possible?

0:32:45.720,0:32:49.522

Wow, so beautiful! You really captured her likeness.

0:32:49.522,0:32:54.516

Have you sent a photo of the drawing to your friend?

0:32:54.516,0:32:55.129

Yeah!

0:32:55.129,0:32:57.336

How did she respond?

0:32:57.336,0:33:03.443

She was actually amazed and surprised because she didn't expect that I would paint her.

0:33:03.443,0:33:09.291

It's really beautiful. Do you want to talk a little bit about your friendship with her?

0:33:09.291,0:33:13.908

We are not actually

0:33:13.908,0:33:17.310

in touch like we were in Ukraine,

0:33:17.310,0:33:22.230  
but still, I guess we have, a

0:33:22.230,0:33:25.594  
good relationship as acquaintances.

0:33:25.594,0:33:28.391  
More, right now.

0:33:28.391,0:33:33.944  
It's just hard to keep in touch with all of the friends back in Ukraine.

0:33:33.944,0:33:36.745  
They just find new friends, or

0:33:36.745,0:33:45.323  
they have other activities. So there's not enough time to communicate, actually.

0:33:45.323,0:33:47.898  
It's really hard.

0:33:47.898,0:33:52.696  
Do you have any other pictures you wanna share? I know you also take photographs.

0:33:52.696,0:33:55.162  
Yeah, I can share.

0:33:55.162,0:34:00.572  
And feel free to send me any pictures that I can..

0:34:00.572,0:34:04.414  
I can upload them later to share with people who are interested.

0:34:04.414,0:34:13.505  
So I guess my artwork is more in beige tones, because it's my favorite color and I just..

0:34:13.505,0:34:18.686  
I just find relaxing and calm, this color.

0:34:18.686,0:34:25.920  
So it was in Vienna, before the war.

0:34:29.920,0:34:30.645  
Those are beautiful photographs.

0:34:32.640,0:34:35.442  
And those are my friends.

0:34:38.440,0:34:42.257  
I just like to capture my friends when they are smiling,

0:34:42.257,0:34:42.757  
so I can

0:34:42.757,0:34:47.751  
show their true emotions.

0:34:47.751,0:34:54.224  
Now that you're living here in Maryland, do you

0:34:54.224,0:34:59.032  
go out in nature here to any parks or gardens, and take photographs here?

0:35:03.000,0:35:08.777  
Actually we moved with my relatives to another place.

0:35:08.777,0:35:10.939  
But,

0:35:10.939,0:35:14.763  
back in the old house,

0:35:14.763,0:35:19.851  
there was a lake, and

0:35:19.851,0:35:24.418  
I was just walking around there every day.

0:35:24.418,0:35:31.926  
It was relaxing for me, so I can just sit there and just meditate.

0:35:31.926,0:35:38.565  
I guess it's distracting,

0:35:38.565,0:35:42.129  
and it also helped me to cope with my emotions.

0:35:42.129,0:35:57.459  
I think a lot of students in your situation experience the same thing, that being outside,  
having a chance to walk or be in nature, can be really helpful. I've heard other students say  
the same thing. Thank you for sharing that.

0:35:59.440,0:36:00.476  
I had a few other questions for you.

0:36:00.476,0:36:11.165  
I know that your future is uncertain, and of course the future of Ukraine is very uncertain.

0:36:11.165,0:36:20.012  
But when you imagine the future for yourself and for your country,

0:36:20.012,0:36:26.318  
say, maybe five years in the future, what do you imagine, or what do you hope for?

0:36:26.318,0:36:33.199  
I just hope that it will end, as soon as possible, and..

0:36:33.199,0:36:37.691  
maybe some of the families reunite.

0:36:37.691,0:36:44.600  
Some of the families that have a chance to reunite, because lots of people died,

0:36:44.600,0:36:52.395  
and not everyone will have a chance to meet with their family members again.

0:36:52.395,0:36:56.821  
And that's just so complicated,

0:36:56.821,0:36:57.752  
and sad, because

0:36:57.752,0:37:05.980  
a lot of young people, children die, and they

0:37:05.980,0:37:13.895  
will not have a chance to meet with anyone from their family again.

0:37:17.880,0:37:19.263  
It's just so hard that

0:37:19.263,0:37:25.629  
some of them didn't really have a chance to say goodbye. They didn't know it was

0:37:25.629,0:37:29.582  
the last time they see each other.

0:37:29.582,0:37:38.440  
But I hope that it will end soon and, maybe..

0:37:38.440,0:37:41.199

Some of

0:37:41.199,0:37:50.521

foreigners, some of the volunteers from other countries will help us to build

0:37:50.521,0:37:54.017

some of the cities from the very beginning,

0:37:54.017,0:38:06.805

because cities like Bakhmut, Mariupol and Kharkiv and eastern parts of the Ukraine,

0:38:06.805,0:38:13.232

they were just destroyed by the Russian army, so..

0:38:13.232,0:38:17.460

I guess we will need help from other countries.

0:38:19.440,0:38:26.869

This is so hard to talk about, and I really appreciate your courage in speaking about this. I know it's not easy. I'm really grateful

0:38:26.869,0:38:29.068

that you're sharing how you're feeling and your hopes.

0:38:31.040,0:38:39.188

Is there something that you would like American people to know about Ukraine, or something that you think Americans..

0:38:39.188,0:38:45.165

Something that's important for Americans to understand about Ukraine, or about the situation now?

0:38:45.165,0:38:56.758

I guess not only Americans but European people and people from other countries, they,

0:38:56.758,0:38:59.743

not all of them, but still a

0:38:59.743,0:39:05.560

big part of those people don't even know where the Ukraine is situated.

0:39:05.560,0:39:14.442

However, it's in the center of Europe, so I guess, I just want that

0:39:14.442,0:39:20.076

those people will get to know a little bit about the Ukraine itself,

0:39:20.076,0:39:23.322

and the culture..

0:39:23.322,0:39:26.964

And

0:39:26.964,0:39:34.696

just to try to be more sympathetic to the people who were affected by the war.

0:39:34.696,0:39:36.200

I guess.

0:39:36.200,0:39:44.424

It's just not all of them understand that

0:39:44.424,0:39:48.409

we didn't come here because of

0:39:48.409,0:39:53.626

how it was bad in Ukraine, or something like that.

0:39:53.626,0:39:58.527

We just came here because of the circumstances, because of the war.

0:39:58.527,0:40:07.265

But if we had a chance, if there wasn't a war, we wouldn't move here, I guess.

0:40:07.265,0:40:13.923

Your life has been completely disrupted by events that are totally out of your control,

0:40:13.923,0:40:17.723

and I can only imagine how that feels.

0:40:17.723,0:40:25.913

I know I speak for a lot of Americans when I say that I have a lot of admiration for the Ukrainian people and for the fight

0:40:25.913,0:40:30.992

that you're putting up. I think,

0:40:30.992,0:40:34.376

Ukraine has really inspired a lot of people,

0:40:34.376,0:40:38.245

and I hope that your country will get the support that it needs.

0:40:40.240,0:40:45.461

How do you feel right now? What emotions are you experiencing as you're describing this?

0:40:48.440,0:40:53.464

I guess, I feel some kind of relief that I can share those emotions,

0:40:53.464,0:41:02.960

but also I feel really mad at Russia because they try to destroy my country.

0:41:02.960,0:41:05.549

That's just so

0:41:05.549,0:41:10.980

devastating what is happening in Ukraine.

0:41:10.980,0:41:18.978

It's understandable to feel that mix of emotions. And I'm really glad that you are taking the time to share this so that other people can better understand.

0:41:18.978,0:41:26.008

Is there anything else that you'd like to add to the conversation today?

0:41:26.008,0:41:32.729

I guess..

0:41:32.729,0:41:36.039

I guess, no!

0:41:36.039,0:41:46.037

I hope that you'll continue doing your artwork. Maybe take some art classes at MC, cause we have a great art program and there are some opportunities

0:41:46.037,0:41:46.615

for students to share their art. So

0:41:46.615,0:41:51.227

after we stop recording, I'll send you some information about that,

0:41:51.227,0:41:57.868

and I want to thank you again for sharing your experience and your thoughts.

0:41:57.868,0:42:01.155

I'm really grateful for you taking the time. Thank you so much!

0:42:01.155,0:42:05.000

Thank you!