

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much for your participation in this project. The goal of this questionnaire is to produce a coherent and detailed narrative of your story. So I recommend that you feel free to say what you want, without having to worry about speaking in depth. This is what we want. Tell me about your birthplace and what it was like and the people who lived there.

**Vera:** Well, I was actually born in Mata de São João, inland Salvador. They are humble people who really fight to survive. At the age of nine I came to Salvador, and I am still here.

**Interviewer:** And what was your birthplace like?

**Vera:** I left there when I was eight, so I don't remember it that much, and then I didn't return, but it was a nice place, good to live in.

**Interviewer:** And what was your childhood like? What are your most beautiful memories?

**Vera:** I had a good childhood, thanks to God at the time my father was an oil worker, so we had conditions that were not great, but good to live, so I say that my adolescence was very good, very nice. Just a minute.

[background conversation]

**Vera:** Sorry, it was my daughter, I had to pick up.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember any particular hobby, game you used to play?

**Vera:** As a child? Yes. When I was a child, my mother was a little strict, she didn't like us playing in the neighbor's house, so we usually played through a fence, and there we played with dolls, ropes, sometimes marbles. Like, games that you don't see here today, that was my game.

**Interviewer:** Talk about your parents and grandparents. Where were they from?

**Vera:** My parents were from Salvador and my grandparents from Mata de São João who in the countryside, they were good people, normal people, with no problems, my family was always united and everything. Thank goodness only good things. I was lucky as a teenager.

**Interviewer:** And what were your parents' professions or jobs?

**Vera:** My mother was a domestic worker, she took care of people, my father was an oil worker, my grandfather had a bakery at the time.

**Interviewer:** What do you remember about your parents and grandparents? What do you remember that they did, ate, drank or talked about?

**Vera:** I had little time with my grandfather, because he soon died. He had diabetes, but he still liked to go to the fridge. And my father was an alcoholic at the time. Even though he had a good financial situation and everything, he really liked to drink at the time, I think that's what led him to pass away so early, maybe if he wasn't an alcoholic and there were the resources we have now, maybe he would still be alive. And my mother didn't drink, my mother never drank, her life was really normal. With age, hypertension came, and then during a crisis, she suddenly died, but other than that, she had no problem at all.

**Interviewer:** What was Pelourinho like when you were a child?

**Vera:** I didn't get to know Pelourinho as a child, I really came to know Pelourinho 10 years ago. And when I came to know it, it was more or less as it is here now. But the way I pictured Pelourinho as a child is that it was a bad place, it was a dirty place and that only prostitutes lived there. It was the way I pictured Pelourinho as a child.

**Interviewer:** What was it like to work in your profession when you were a child?

**Vera:** As a child?

**Interviewer:** Was it different?

**Vera:** I did not understand the question.

**Interviewer:** What was it like to work in your profession as a child?

**Vera:** My current profession? You see, my current profession, when I was a child, did not exist, we just did our children's hair at home. Now it is gradually becoming a profession. But it wasn't at the time, we just did our children's hair at home. When I took a course, it was in secretariat, I spent 15 years working in that area. After the company closed and everything, then I didn't want to work for anyone again, that's when I had the idea of coming to Pelourinho to work as a hair braider.

**Interviewer:** And how did you learn to do what you do?

**Vera:** I was forced to learn it by doing my daughters' hair, I have a daughter, a girl, at the time I didn't know how to do anything, and then I gradually practiced doing braids on her, so much so that today she says that she was the guinea pig, that's why I'm here today, I thank her.

**Interviewer:** Do you like to eat?

**Vera:** I love it.

**Interviewer:** What are your favorite foods?

**Vera:** You see, I like to eat everything, but my age doesn't allow it anymore, so I have to re-educate myself again, so I normally try to eat light foods, beans without too much fat,

because otherwise I would be [unintelligible 00:06:29] talking to my colleague, that even my beans, [unintelligible 00:06:31] mocotó, not now, I really just go with water and salt and I'm happy, so that what happened to my mother doesn't happen to me, because my mother had high blood pressure. I also have high blood pressure, but I try to control it so it does not get worse, because this is hereditary, there is no way.

**Interviewer:** Do you have a recipe to share with us?

**Vera:** I did not get that.

**Interviewer:** A cooking recipe.

**Vera:** No, I suck at cooking, I just do the basics, rice and beans, chicken, but I'm not really a good cook. I don't have that gift.

**Interviewer:** Do you cook at home, do you like to cook?

**Vera:** I like to cook, I have to cook because I don't have anyone to do it for me, because if I had the means, I wouldn't cook.

**Interviewer:** Do you like music?

**Vera:** I do. People call me old-fashioned, but I prefer old songs, because they had good lyrics, now you hear music that is uncalled for. I think they have no good lyrics, they just talk about sex, shaming women, and in the past it wasn't like that, you listened to a song and you felt the lyrics, like Roberto Carlos. And other songs, I really like listening to old songs, I listen to current music because there is no way to avoid it.

**Interviewer:** What kind of music do you prefer?

**Vera:** It's like I said, romantic music, old songs, like Roberto Carlos, Alcione, that kind of music, slow music, not axé, I listen to axé because there's no way around it, because everywhere you go, radio, everything, they just play axé, but I prefer the old songs more.

**Interviewer:** Do you sing?

**Vera:** No, I'm terrible. I can't do it.

**Interviewer:** Can you sing something for us?

**Vera:** No, don't do that, don't do that please, I'm not good at singing. No, no, no. No, no, please.

**Interviewer:** What is your favorite saying?

**Vera:** Saying, what do you mean? Saying? What is your favorite saying?

**Participante:** Yeah, "When you love, you take care."

**Vera:** Yeah, when you love, you take care, love, affection.

**Interviewer:** What is your religion?

**Vera:** Candomblé.

**Interviewer:** How important is religion to you?

**Vera:** You see, unfortunately my religion here is somewhat criticized. Lately what we've been seeing is the Baptist Church-- I don't even want to mention the name, but I'm in the Candomblé religion. I love what I do, I think it's where I found myself. I go to the Catholic Church, but I'm also in Candomblé. Especially because it is connected, Catholic church and Candomblé religion.

**Interviewer:** Is there a connection between what you do and your religion?

**Vera:** No, it is totally different because in my religion I would be selling acarajé, and that is not what I do, I work with braids.

**Interviewer:** And can you describe what your favorite part of your religious service is?

**Vera:** You see, in my religion I'm like an authority, actually I am an authority, I'm an Ekele. An Ekele is a trusted person of the father, mother and orixás. So that is my job, to take care, to watch over the saints.

**Interviewer:** What is the name of your profession or job?

**Vera:** Lately I work as a hair braider, but I took a course in secretariat. But for lack of space and opportunity and also not wanting to work for anyone again, then I became a hair braider, which I like to do and thank God I can live off of.

**Interviewer:** What do you think about your profession?

**Vera:** I think I hope it will grow much more, because lately the people here do not value it much. What I notice is that people from outside come looking for our work. And I realized that it is mainly because it is street work. They get crazy when they see a job on the street, like hair braiding, which they do not see in other countries, so I hope that our work will grow more and more every day.

**Interviewer:** How did you start working in this profession?

**Vera:** There was an event here, at the time it was Mr. Leal who did it, who put all the hair braiders in the Terreiro de Jesus plaza, he gathered everyone and put them all there, and that's when I passed by and saw them and I said: "Why don't I also do it?" Then I had help from my colleague there, who had more time here, that he said: "Vera, why don't you make a place here too and start working?" Then I came with **[unintelligible 00:11:45]** and now I've been here in Pelourinho for eight years, working as a hair braider.

**Interviewer:** How long have you been working in this area?

**Vera:** Eight years, only as a hair braider, eight years.

**Interviewer:** What things do you like and don't like working with here?

**Vera:** You see, what I like is that thanks to God, people recognize all my work and value me. Now, what I don't like here is the discrimination. Because we work on the street, people think that we are vulgar people, that we are here for everything, and it is not true, I at least, I will speak for myself, I come here to get my daily bread to take home for my children. Just that, I do their hair, I leave, so that's what I want from Pelourinho, to earn my money honestly and then leave. Just because I work on the street doesn't mean I am a prostitute, that I sell drugs in order to stay in Pelourinho.

**Interviewer:** Did you work elsewhere?

**Vera:** I did work for a very big insurance company that had several branches. I don't know if I can say the name. Can I? It was a company called Companhia de Seguros da Bahia, I worked in the administrative area of the company.

**Interviewer:** What things do you like about your profession?

**Vera:** Well, I liked to work in the administrative area, at Companhia de Seguros da Bahia, but I realized that I suffered a little bit of discrimination because I was black. So I think this is what led me to not want to work elsewhere, because unfortunately at the company where I worked, at the Salvador branch, I was the only black person. And that is why they demanded a lot from me, I was humiliated, so I preferred to leave and thank God that opportunity came along and I am still here.

**Interviewer:** What do you dislike about your job?

**Vera:** No, I do it for love, I don't have to dislike my job. I try to improve every day so that my work is recognized, so that people look in the mirror and say, "I like it."

**Interviewer:** How do you think tourists see you?

**Vera:** Thank God I've never had a problem with tourists, quite the contrary, sometimes I am even surprised to hear people talking a lot about racism in the United States, and here they treat us so well, with such affection, that sometimes I don't understand, "Is that really it?" At least I have nothing to complain about tourists here, I have always been treated well. Also because of the way I look, because I'm black and my hair is different, they insist on coming to take a picture, sometimes I even feel awkward when I see them taking it, but I don't know why my photo, because we don't know what they use our photos for overseas. But on the other hand, I am pleased to know that they are taking a picture of me, they come and do their hair with me and leave satisfied.

**Interviewer:** What is your relationship like with the people of Bahia?

**Vera:** Thank God it's good, if you ask everyone around here who Vera is, everyone will say good things, because I always try to get along with everyone, no matter if it's a store owner, a seller. Because we also work on the street, so we have to have a good relationship with everyone.

**Interviewer:** Do you have a different relationship with men than with women?

**Vera:** For me everyone is the same, the important thing is to respect, be it a man, a woman, I have no problem with either.

**Interviewer:** Are you married?

**Vera:** Today I am tired of being here doing nothing, my first client will be him, unfortunately it is time for me to leave. I wish I could have stayed here all day working, but unfortunately God knows what he does, today it doesn't work, tomorrow it will, the day after tomorrow is a better day.

**Interviewer:** And do you have a husband?

**Vera:** Yes, I have been married for 25 years.

**Interviewer:** And how did you meet your husband?

**Vera:** I met him at a party in the square here in a nearby town called Simões Filho, we went there, I went there, he went too, we met there and we are still together, 35 years in total.

**Interviewer:** And does he work?

**Vera:** He works as a metallurgist, we have a small company, not that big, he makes bars, windows and works with that.

**Interviewer:** Who is the person who makes the most money in your family.

**Vera:** Unfortunately we-- It's him, compared to me, it's him, of course. But we work like this, we don't have a fixed salary, we really work hard and try to survive. And thank God we are getting what God gives us, and below God is orixá. I have a daughter who just graduated, she is 25 years old, I have another 21-year-old who is now in college and the 13-year-old boy who, thank God, is also on his way. At least I don't have to worry much about them.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your children, their lives, their jobs, hopes and expectations for them.

**Vera:** I have three children, thank God they are-- I have two girls and a boy, and they are-- I can say that I have to thank God on my knee every day because they are children who, even though their parents don't have much money, but they are children who make me proud, who work hard, who study, because I see many teenagers who

are 10, 12 with a child in their arms, and mine with 21 and the other with 25 always wanting to grow up, going to college so that in the future they think about having a child and everything, but at the moment they want to grow up, which we don't see much today, you see a 10, 12-year-old kid with a child on their waist, unfortunately it's the new generation that we see. So I am happy and I have to thank God every day for the children God gave me.

**Interviewer:** Are you teaching your daughters to do what you do?

**Vera:** They know how to do it, but it's like I told you at the beginning of the interview, here in Pelourinho people mix things up. When I really started, the youngest girl came, the one who is 21 years old, to help me, but because of the harassment, because they saw her and me here working, they thought there could be something more, so I took her out of here and I stayed alone. But she knows how to do the same profession that I have, except that today one graduated from college, in business administration, and the other, the one who used to stay here with me is going to college at Jorge Amado doing Human Resources. So I'm happy, right? Because unfortunately you will see a little bit of that if you interview other hair braiders. People are mix things up here a lot. It is like I told you, my goal is to work, earn my money honestly to support my family.

**Interviewer:** Did you live in another state?

**Vera:** No, I never did. I've always been in Mata de São João, which is also part of Bahia, and then I never left Salvador.

**Interviewer:** Do you participate in any group or organization?

**Vera:** I participate. You see, we, when I say we, I mean my family in general. My brother-in-law has an association called the Olodum Tent association. And in this association we do a lot of social work. We do a lot of social work, events, at a time we worked with PET material, families went there, took it, we paid for those bottles. Unfortunately we didn't have our own space, so we had to return it. Because he inherited a small space from his father, our headquarters is already more or less built so that we can do that social work in society again.

**Interviewer:** And what role do you have in this group or organization?

**Vera:** I didn't get that.

**Interviewer:** What role do you have?

**Vera:** In this association, at first it was a carnival block, we stopped being a block to do social work. We have no politician, we have no help, it is my brother-in-law's salary that he is happy to fund with, thank God he works at Petrobras and he is happy to help the community. But we are not for profit, it is non-profit social work.

**Interviewer:** What kind of relationship do you have with other women working in the field?

**Vera:** Thank God, I think that because of my character, I get along with all of them. Unfortunately not everyone can say that, because I am sad that we-- This is a job that people come from abroad to look for, I would like our colleagues to be more united. Instead of fighting over a client or another, if one has two, three, the other has none, I would very much like our colleagues to come and make that exchange between them, which unfortunately does not happen. So that's the only thing that makes me sad in my work area.

**Interviewer:** Would you like to talk about anything else that we haven't talked about so far?

**Vera:** I hope I did well in the interview, you were lucky because I am a very shy person, and that this interview makes people recognize us, recognize that we are here to earn our salary, working honestly and that people come to help us however possible.

**Interviewer:** May I ask what is your year of birth?

**Vera:** I'm from 9/1/1963, I'm 46 years old.

**Interviewer:** And what is your last year of school that you reached?

**Vera:** I finished high school, I stopped studying years ago, I don't remember exactly, but I completed all phases. I just didn't get to go to college because at the time I couldn't do it, because my son came, my marriage and everything, it's no justification, but what I didn't do, thank God my daughters are doing it today.

**Interviewer:** And your job?

**Vera:** My job is fine. Thank God I do something that I identified with, that I like to do and I feel good about.

**Interviewer:** Where do you live?

**Vera:** I live in Massaranduba, Cidade Baixa.

**Interviewer:** Is that the name of your neighborhood?

**Vera:** Massaranduba.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for your participation. If you have questions, you can talk to me. Thanks.

**Vera:** I hope that this interview, as I told you, will help to bring some strength, some help for us hair braiders, I'm not asking just for me, for us the hair braiders groups in Pelourinho.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.

**Vera:** You're welcome.