

Being a musician: an excellent passport

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I landed at Lisbon airport on the morning of 25.05.2004. In my luggage I brought an electric bass, a few CDs, some books, a modest sum of nine hundred and twenty euro in my wallet and a Brazilian passport. With this sparse luggage, I knew that I would face a big marathon before getting a visa to live and work in Portugal. In the meantime, I would have to support myself with the little money I had brought and, on very short notice, would need to find some work in order to survive. As a newly arrived immigrant, I basically had two goals: to do exactly what I did in Brazil - that is, to live from music - and to establish myself in Portugal.

As soon as I arrived, I got settled in the house of a befriended Brazilian musician which, through a simple phone call with a colleague, got me a three month contract to play in a nightclub in Cascais, as well as a small apartment in Algés where I could settle for the period of the contract. It was from that point that I started to believe that there were opportunities to subsist in Portugal. At first, things went very well and my enchantment with the 'new country' was growing day by day. I found the Portuguese to be receptive, attentive and above all very tolerant, although the direct way of saying things appeared a bit strange to me. I decided to follow the advice of the same friend that had welcomed me when I arrived: "*in a country of which one does not yet know well how it is, listen more and talk less*". However, all the conversations in which I was trying to get to know what would be the best way to get a visa and to finally be able to legalise myself were far from encouraging. Almost nobody gave me confidence and the Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF) [Immigration Service] at that time could not cope with the huge numbers of immigrants, due to the limited amount of staff. Faced with this situation, I committed myself to reading and investigating everything about immigration laws, but without any hope in getting a contract as a musician. Proposals such as 'white marriages' (those that serve only to get a residence permit) and fictitious contracts were not lacking, but I decided not to accept any of them and I came up with the idea of turning to my European ancestors and see if I could get to my goal through that door. After some research, I found out that my origin was linked to the Beiras region through my mother's side (Neves) and to the Minho region through my father's side (Roriz). As for Neves, I never found out exactly who they were. As for the Roriz family, I discovered that I descended from sergeant-major António Ferreira Roriz, from Minho, which settled in Mariana, Minas Gerais, in the nineteenth century, more specifically in 1873, exactly one hundred years before the day I was born. Therefore, as to my Portuguese descent, this was already very distant and once again my hopes were low.

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Time passed by and the period in which I should have left the country eventually ended. I resorted to the trick of leaping to Morocco and back. During my return, evidently, I had major problems in the port of Algeciras, but after listening to a long sermon by the Spanish police, they let me continue and I could return to Lisbon. From that point, I had another ninety days to resolve my situation, and if I would be not to some extent successful, I had already decided to return to Brazil, because I would not stay illegally. Before living in Portugal, I had already been in Mozambique, Japan and the United States, and in none of these countries I had had the bitter experience of being an illegal immigrant.

The weeks went by, until I received a call from singer Fernando Girão, with whom I had recorded a few months earlier. He had always excited me to stay in Portugal. He clearly was very excited on the phone, because he had found a way for me to stay in Portugal: Article 87, paragraph g),¹ which provided that persons involved in sports and the arts could make a direct application for residence, as long as they represented some relevance to the country.² But what importance could I have for Portugal? A caring lady of SEF instructed me to collect everything that could prove my skills in music, as well as letters of reference from artists and organizations that I had worked with in Portugal. I made a folder with my graduate degree diploma in popular music at UNICAMP in Campinas, São Paulo, and joined reference letters from everyone I had worked with as a musician or music teacher. None of these people denied me their help and even Fernando Girão helped me during this phase.

Once I had gathered all the paperwork, I went to SEF on 11.03.2005, and managed to get the application for residence. An employee brought me a small bluish paper that stated that I was awaiting residence, and told me that from that moment onwards I was regularised, and therefore could stay in Portugal. Interestingly, although being regularised from that moment, I asked her how many days I could still have stayed as a tourist, if I would not have been successful in the application for residence. The lady asked for my passport, left for a few minutes and after returning, told me with a smile, *"Today would have been your last legal day"*. From that day, I almost had to wait a year until, in January 2006, I finally received a letter in my house stating that my application for residence had been granted and that I should address myself to the SEF balcony on Avenue António Augusto de Aguiar, with my passport, proof of address, criminal certificate and two photos. Ironically, my appointment was made for the 11 March 2006, that is, exactly one year after I submitted my paperwork.

When people ask me whether I like living in Portugal, the first thing I say is that, despite some difficulties that I have - like any Portuguese also has - I am very grateful for everything I have achieved in this country, which, as a thirty year old, I chose to be my new homeland. Today I have a curriculum of which I cannot complain, and I have experienced things here that I could not have experienced in my country. Professionally,

I have played with the greatest Portuguese artists and I was a member of the group Madredeus, and with all these professionals I got very much enriched. I am married to a Portuguese citizen and I attend the Master in Ethnomusicology at the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (FCSH) of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. I feel totally integrated into society. I cannot and will not forget that this country has given me a residence permit, by means of which I could enjoy the right to work, study and live peacefully, thanks to a very special condition - being a musician. Throughout my life, I will always take into account the recognition and credibility that I have been given as an artist. Thank you Portugal and all Portuguese and immigrants who have helped me since I landed here on that morning of 25.05.2004.

Notes

¹ Note from the edition: The following is written on Article 87 from the Annex 'Repúblicação do Decreto-Lei n.º 244/98, de 8 de Agosto (condições de entrada, permanência, saída e afastamento de estrangeiros do território português), com as alterações introduzidas pela Lei n.º 97/99, de 26 de Julho, pelo Decreto-Lei n.º 4/2001, de 10 de Janeiro, e pelo presente diploma' from Decree-Law nr. 34/2003, published on Diário da República — I SÉRIE-A, NR. 47, page 1365, from February 25, relative to the residence visa waiver: '1 — Não carecem de visto para obtenção de autorização de residência os estrangeiros: ... g) *Cuja actividade no domínio científico, cultural, económico ou social seja considerada de interesse fundamental para o País.*'

² Note from the edition: General Legislation – 'Decreto-Lei n.º 244/98 de 8 de Agosto (Republicado pelo artigo 21.º do Decreto Lei n.º 34/2003, de 25 de Fevereiro) h) *Cuja actividade no domínio científico, cultural ou económico seja considerada de interesse fundamental para o País;* (Aditado pelo artigo 1.º do Decreto Lei n.º 4/2001 de 10 de Janeiro)'.