

# EXPRESSING HER HEART IN A NEW LANGUAGE

By Jennifer Dennis • March 6th 2021



KATIA RIPANI TERZI



KATIA, TRAVELING IN NORTHRN ARIZONA



KATIA AND HER HUSBAND, SCOTT

**I** *felt a mystic connection with the land and the sky...*

Katia Ripani Terzi first traveled to the United States in 2013 to explore the mountains of northern California and eventually, northern Arizona. Traveling together with other women from Brazil, as part of a spiritual retreat, she spent 20 days exploring the Grand Canyon, Sedona, and other remote areas of the state. She was captivated by the environment.

It was also during this trip that she would meet her future husband, Scott, a nature guide who conducts tours throughout Northern Arizona, and shares his knowledge of the history, ecology, and geology of the land. When she returned to Brazil following her vacation, they maintained contact, exchanging nearly two thousand messages.

In Brazil, Katia had worked in broadcasting for radio and television for over 20 years. After obtaining a degree in social communications, she began her career as a television producer. She later became a radio personality with her own morning talk show, *Cafe Com Astral*, in São Paulo, which featured popular Brazilian music and astrological reports. It was her dream to combine her love of communications and astrology.

*I gave daily horoscope and astrological readings for callers. For me astrology is an instrument to self knowledge for people to know more about themselves, about their talents, their fragility, and their weaknesses. I love this because I can help the people show how they are the best.*

After many years, working in radio, Katia transitioned her career into an online presence, giving astrological readings to private clients. This granted her more freedom and time for travel. After returning from her trip to the United States, she reflected on her life and future possibilities.

*In São Paulo, I was just a workaholic and mother. Being in Flagstaff, and this country, made me feel reborn. It gave me a new chance. Since I was alone, and I had flexibility in my job, my son was 20 years old; I decided to visit the U.S. again. I didn't expect to move, but everything worked out.*

Living in the United States brought its challenges. One, was the language barrier. While she had taken English classes throughout her secondary school and a bit during her university years, these classes never really prepared her to speak and understand the colloquial forms of the language. This caused a lot of frustration during those first few years in the United States as she had never been faced with the demand of using the language in all aspects of her life. She was unable to truly express all that she wanted to say, in the same way that she would in her native language of Portuguese.





KATIA TAKING THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE DURING HER NATURALIZATION CEREMONY



KATIA WITH HER CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

*It's easy when you express your heart in your language. To do this in a foreign language; it's very difficult. And, especially in my career, you have to express your heart, it's not a surface thing, you have to go deep, and in a foreign language, it's challenging. I even think you have to be good in your own language to be a good communicator, to express yourself fully. In a foreign language, it is so hard.*

In 2018, Katia found English classes in Coconino Community College's Adult Education program. The first year, she attended classes intensively four days a week, and she has continued taking classes remotely throughout the pandemic.

*I love attending the classes online. Everyone participates and no one feels intimidated. Everyone feels comfortable. I like working together as a group. We know each other, how each other thinks, feels, we respect each other. I also love the topics in class. I love to know about people who gave some contribution to mankind, to know about Louis Pastuer, to know about the arts, the singer, Nina Simone, the story of the Beatles, writers like Ernest Hemingway.... I know about these in Portuguese, but it's a different thing to talk about in English.*

For Katia, the transition to remote learning has been a positive experience.

*I feel the future is going this way. You can't go back anymore to what it was. I think the technology will be increased and you have to deal with this, we need to try to reach different forms of communication to do our jobs.*

Katia also participated in the Civics and Citizenship class designed for students that anticipate taking the test to get their U.S. citizenship. The class covers historical events, themes related to government, and social issues, but all in the context of acquiring the language tools to be able to articulate about these topics through writing and speech.

*When I studied the 100 questions [for the citizenship test], I noticed that I knew about everything because of the class. The teacher did a very good job. It's important for everyone, Americans too, maybe the average American doesn't know about these topics.*

In the last year, Katia began the official process of becoming a U.S. citizen. Despite some delays because of COVID-19, she was finally able to schedule her appointment for the test in February of this year. Upon passing, she attended her naturalization ceremony in Phoenix.

*During the test I felt nervous. After, I felt 'mission accomplished!'*

With the accomplishment of becoming a U.S. citizen, she now feels more secure to be able to embark on something new.

*I still need to improve more my English to start a job. My challenge is the language, and I want to feel fluent to do what I did in Portuguese. I know I have to be patient and go slowly. And, I want to make a*

*difference in others' lives. I have to contribute more and I want to express my heart and my knowledge in another language with truth. Now it's time to grow ideas or work with new ideas. Humanity is facing different times, how to do better, to live better, to have good health, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. I try not to romanticize the past, if you romanticize the past you don't stay ready to go beyond this.*