

## Ivan's Story

I was born in Cali, a city in Colombia near the Pacific Ocean. However, I grew up in Bogota, the capital. In Cuba I studied film and photography. I started very early to take pictures and make documentaries.

In 2005 I met my future wife, a French woman who had just traveled through Colombia, and I fell in love. She has lived with me for four years in Colombia. When we have been on holiday to France, I have met her family - and I liked what I saw and experienced there.



Back in Colombia, I started to work on various projects of international humanitarian and relief organizations. But my girlfriend wanted to go back to France to be near her family and complete her studies. Honestly, I never thought of living permanently in France. I always wanted to stay for a while. Moreover, it was fun to be the project coordinator of the international organization.

In 2009, we got married. That was the moment when we decided to go to France. I returned to Colombia, finished my work contract and a few months later, I was back to France to live there permanently.

At the beginning everything was just pure joy. It was as if we were on vacation, like if you get to know a country through traveling. But then the winter came and it was no longer a winter holiday. Our money was running out and my French was not good. Suddenly I understood that my French had to be better if I wanted to find a job that suits my qualifications. I went on a French course. I sought contact with clubs and cultural life in Dijon. I worked as a volunteer at almost all celebrations and festivals in the city. So I slowly weaved a new social network and have made myself known in the city. Thanks to a few good friends, the patience of my wife and my desire to build a new life in Dijon, I slowly started to actually want to live in France.

In 2010 I met the head of the University of radios and have proposed to make a show about Colombian music and he agreed to it. I must say: Thanks to this radio show I can stand the distance from my country. Whenever I'm "on air", I feel at home again. It is also a good source of additional income. Otherwise, I work as a DJ at parties, in bars and at festivals.

So far, my work situation in France has not been the most stable. I helped out at schools, helped with the harvest - because Dijon is situated in a wine -growing region - and I have run photography workshops with young people and children. But I still have no stable job that allows me to be a bit more relaxed.

That's why I founded a club, so I can get photography workshops and intercultural projects off the ground. I think this is the best way for my life in France to be accepted: Offer something that expands what I know and learn more.

I can say that I feel good and that I have mostly felt good. What made me really happy is the birth of my daughter Nina. She was born in July 2012. She is my drive and my joy. And just like the radio, which gives me the feeling of being at home, Nina gives me this feeling and it drives me to do everything necessary to build the bridge between France and Colombia and not to travel there anymore.

What I like best in France and Dijon is security. Especially now that I have a little daughter growing up, I realize how important it is to live in a city where you can feel safe. When we lived in Bogotá, we were always on guard, conscious of who was coming in the other direction on the road. We have also been

robbed frequently. I hate to say this, but Bogotá is in Colombia and one must always keep his eyes very wide open.

In Dijon, the people treat me very well. Some are completely ignorant and have not the slightest idea where Colombia is or what language you speak there. They just know this is the land of football and cocaine. "Columbia ", " Pablo Escobar , cocaine, guerrillas ! " Yeah, that is of course part of our reality, but not all of it. That is the image which is put across by the media.

Sometimes I think France is a country that hides its racism. France pretends to have a tolerant rule of law. But part of the reality here is discrimination. Many people have no awareness of when and how they are racist. They always do things "without meaning to ." Many immediately put you in a box, depending on what color skin you have or where you come from, especially if you come from the Arab countries or from Eastern Europe. We Latin Americans have a better image. Many people ask me whether I am also a victim of racism. Because I 'm a black, Afro-Colombian. Maybe I've fallen victim to covert discrimination, maybe this is why I have not found a job that suits my qualifications. Perhaps they are right. But perhaps it is also related to the current time of crisis.

It is certain that I will never stop missing my country, its people, my friends, my family, the places that I know and the stories that I have experienced.