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VIEWPOINT

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“I want to use the power of the law to save other people’s lives.”

Arthur Veloso

The student activist and paralegal student on the power of speaking up

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Arthur Veloso's journey into student activism

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Photos By: Adam Rodriguez, Reporter

After fleeing discrimination and danger in Brazil, paralegal student Arthur Veloso arrived in the United States with determination and a dream. Now as a student at Skyline College, he's turning his struggles into purpose, using education and advocacy to uplift immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities.

Veloso's journey to Skyline began with his pursuit of education in Brazil, where he studied at a highly competitive law school.

"I was in one of the most prestigious law schools in Brazil, and it was really hard to get into that law school because you have to take a very hard standard test," Veloso said. "So I was trained in this very competitive environment."

While committed to his studies, Veloso also became involved in LGBTQ+ activism. He spoke about Brazil's alarming rates of violence against the LGBTQ+ community and how his time in

law school became a platform for advocacy and support.

"Many of us had to hide their sexualities and judge and express their gender in a different way," Veloso said.

Veloso said that living authentically as a member of the LGBTQ+ community in Brazil often came with serious risks, and the constant fear and discrimination. The discrimination and danger he faced as a member of the LGBTQ+ community in Brazil ultimately pushed him to seek safety and a new start in the U.S.

"That's one of the reasons in which I came to the United States; because I was (a) victim of this kind of unfortunate situation that happens to our people (people of the LGBTQ+ community)," Veloso said.

While the situation in his home country was certainly a major factor, what also gave him the courage to leave Brazil for the U.S. was the support of his family — support that didn't come

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immediately from his father.

“He did not accept me at first, it took about a year for him to start slowly accepting the fact that I am gay,” Veloso said.

Veloso said that while his father came to support and respect him for who he was, he also reminded him that not everyone would do the same, and that education would be his greatest shield.

“One thing my father told me... ‘you have to study very hard to be one of the best students that you could possibly be. So people are going to respect you, not because of your identity, but because of how knowledgeable you are; because education is power, and you can use the power to protect yourself,’” Veloso said.

That advice stayed with Veloso, as studying law became his way of fighting back and protecting not only himself, but others who face similar challenges.

Veloso said the approval from his family to move to the U.S. meant a lot to him and showed how much they care for him.

“That’s the true meaning of love for me,” Veloso said. “If you love someone, you do whatever you can to protect them.”

When he and his family came to the U.S. in 2019, they were unsure if they’d be able to stay due to the complexities of immigration law.

“I came here as a tourist, but then I found a law firm that helped me to apply for asylum, and they basically gave me life in America,” Veloso said.

While his family knew they could stay in the U.S. with the help of the law firm, the journey wouldn’t be easy. Veloso had to earn a U.S. high school diploma, find a job to cover living expenses, and learn an entirely new language: English.

“It’s very traumatic to give up your entire education and start from the very bottom in another country,” Veloso said. Veloso said immigrating to the U.S. is a deeply emotional and difficult process. One, he said, that should never be taken lightly.

While his path was difficult Veloso said finding support at Skyline has made a big difference in his journey.

“I applied for Skyline College, and I have been studying here for free ever since because of my situation, and also because Skyline College has a lot of support,” Veloso said.

Beyond just financial and academic support Veloso said the diverse community at Skyline is something he appreciates. “I’m grateful for this beautiful community that we have here,” Veloso said. “There is not the same thing for other places in the United States, but we are very lucky.”

This diverse community is often seen through Skyline’s Undocumented Community Center (UCC), a space where Veloso said he feels a sense of belonging.

“In this space, we’re able to bring our common experiences

together,” Veloso said. “We can help each other, we can lift each other up.”

Veloso said that through his experiences with both students and staff at the UCC, he has seen how many immigrants — especially those who are undocumented — often feel powerless compared to U.S. citizens when it comes to speaking out against injustice.

“Undocumented people, immigrant people in general, don’t have the same privilege as American people to speak up when something bad happens to them,” Veloso said.

Veloso’s experience as an undocumented student shaped his goal to pursue law, seeing education as a way to fight for immigrant communities and create meaningful change.

“I want to use the power of the law to save other people’s lives,” Veloso said.

Veloso will graduate from Skyline this year and will continue his education at University of California Berkeley with 98% of his tuition covered by financial support.

When asked what advice Veloso has for immigrant students going through the same struggles he does when trying to start a new life in the U.S., Veloso offered words of encouragement rooted in resilience and legacy.

“Don’t give up. Keep going,” Veloso said. “Think about the people you have behind you, your ancestors, the people who have fought for the opportunity to be in college today.”

