Do you want to talk about yourself?

Yes. As I said, I've started training Jiu-jitsu in 2002, August 16th of 2002.

I'm turning 20 this year, this year I'm achieving black belt.

I'm very focused, want to compete, and I have many plans, like, I had the opportunity,

I want to give the opportunity to many people aswell, on Jiu-jitsu at the favela,

which is the priority, rescue children, being able to make what's possible to take people out of...

As he said, right, he went to Penha yesterday and he saw a lot of guns.

And that is what I don't want, I want to see children today following a good path.

Being able to study, having a good education, culture, wisdom.

The important things, right?

Which is what I always seek for my brothers, my fellow, my friends, my friend's children.

And that's it. My real goal in Jiu-jitsu is the rescue, it's not even being world champion, it's not

having a great gym, be a millionaire and all that.
My goal is to have the most children on a good path, get it?

And that's it, I love Jiu-jitsu, been doing it for 20 years, have my master who I love, my father, Aureo Couto.

All I can do is thank him, because after my father passed away 4 years ago, he assumed this role of being responsible for me, being always there for me.

So you have a family there at Vidigal? Do you live with your family?

I live with my younger brother, Yago, he is 22 years old.

Then I have an older brother who lives at Barra da Tijuca, his name is Yuri, and my mother lives at the Lagos region, which is...

Do you have children?

No, I don't have children, I have a nephew.

Ah, a nephew.

And thank God I have three dogs and one cat.

Nice!

Two german sheperds.

Sheepdog?

So, yeah, like I was saying that was a little introduction about Igor, he lives in Vidigal. Are we going to Vidigal later?

Yes!

That's why nowadays I think better of, after the purple belt, when I've reached brown, I thought that it isn't just about the money, it isn't just about...

Discrimination.

Yes.

Because the Gracie family is pernambucana, right? So there's this northeastern origin of eating aÃ§aÃ, which they brought to Rio too, it's traditional for sportsmen in Rio to eat aÃ§aÃ.

And why is that?

By the fact that it is a healthy food, it gives energy post and pre training, it isn't something that will have a bad digestion during training.

So it's always good to have some aÃ§aÃ.

There was this one time, I had just walked my dog, I went down the hill, so I went to that jackfruit tree area, which is located on the other side of the tip of that big rock.

Then I was walking, once I finished walking my dog, as I got home, the gunshots started. I was on the terrace, it seemed as if the shots were crossing over here, they were coming too high [making gun noises].

I had to run downstairs and stay down there because it was very noisy, and the gunshots were coming from right in front of us.

The gunfight was happening around here, inside this alley.

Then for a while, for about two years, people who used to live here used to suffer a lot regarding the police coming in and the confrontations happening, there were always confrontations.

Like, every day, 7:00AM it was certain to happen a confrontation. A little while before the pandemics even, a year or two before the pandemics, we were having a hard time here.

At least the people from this area.

Policemen all the time coming in, trying to catch drugs, trying to find criminals.
They never managed to find. Killed innocents, killed children, killed workers.

And that's it, but thank god now we are fine.

Yes, now it's tranquil, right?

I've been through a lot of bad situations, like, coming home
up that street where you saw the motorcycle taxi...

I was down there and... [boom - boom - boom] I had run back home.

Seriously?

[tu - tu - tu - tu] A lot of gunshots.

Wow, gunshots?

It's incomparable.

Wow.

There were times at which I had to go down my street at 5:00AM and they were coming up the alley.

Who?

The policemen.

Policemen?

Hands on your head!

Ah, you too?

Slap on the head, "go down hurry", kick in the butt.

I was going down here to go to work at 5:00AM, a bit further ahead there, where we went up the stairs, on the white wall.

Going down there I've already met them there early in the morning,
they put me against the wall, searched me.

It's very aggressive.

Kicked my butt and told me to go to work,
I was going to work and they were harassing me.

It has happened to me many times, here in the favela
it's very natural to happen these sort of things.

And at every moment be living this confrontation of drug dealing, of policemen wanting to come up, of this and that...

Always happening, many times, confrontations.
Now the pandemics made it calm down a lot, thank God.

It's more tranquil, right?

During the pandemics the policemen couldn't come up here.

But there were some interventions, like in JacarÃ©zinho, where they've killed many people, you can look it up on the internet later.

One of the biggest slaughters that happened was last year in JacarÃ©zinho,
where 28 people were killed.

It happened at the end of last year in Morro do Salgueiro too,
which is in NiterÃ³i, 22 to 25 people have died.

Here in Vidigal, while I've been living here, the most we had was around 4 people killed during a confrontation of policemen coming up, I don't remember more than that.

Did you know any of the people who were killed by the police?

That time where 4 people were killed, 2 were innocent, they were workers, one was a doorman and the

other one worked with delivery.

By the police?

It was the police. The policemen answered legally for that. It were the policemen who came up here, there was an investigation afterwards, they found out they were hiding in a house,

they shot downwards and didn't want to know who was there,
just went [boom - boom - boom] and there were two innocents.

The police?

Yeah, they killed everyone, 4 people.

So the police is worse?

Like, in the vision of the resident of the favela, the marginalized, the policemen isn't good.

We will need them in certain moments, for safety and all,
but inside the community it harms us a lot.

At least according to the point of view of some residents, by the fact that they want to come in the alley and confront people who are in here,

and we know that this isn't how we are going to solve the issue of drug dealing.

We know it isn't the policemen coming up here catching a criminal there... The criminal there doesn't hold all the drugs, who holds all the drugs are the big bosses who cross the borders...

By airplane. How is the guy who is here is going
to make the drugs arrive here? It isn't him who does that.

Yes.

So I think they should rethink that concept of the poor killing the poor, you know? It's a war that's never going to end.

How many people live here?

In Vidigal there's around 50 thousand inhabitants.

50 thousand?

50 thousand.

Exactly.

More or less that.

Wow.

And here there are two kindergarten schools, there's two public schools, a private school, and only one health center.

A health center, hospital.

A health center where you take vaccines...

Oh, that, a clinic.

Yeah, a clinic, just one and it's the size of that shop.

And, in general, do you like living here?

I love, for real, I love living here, to me it's priceless
waking up in the morning and watching the sun rise there.

The best sights I've seen in my life, like, waking up early, getting up here at the terrace, watching the sun rise and say: alright, one more day to start, let's go.

Many times, just by getting up on the terrace, looking forward and seeing the sea, the sun, it already gave me the will to follow my path and realize that I have much more to do than just being here.

I even think because of that, by the fact of always seeing the big buildings and cars down there, I've always wanted to be there, but I love here too.

Here I'm with my friends, I feel safe. Even though it might not look safe to the people outside, here I feel 100% safe inside my community.

So you feel safe here?

100% safe inside my community, as long as the police isn't coming up here, because, honestly, when the policemen come, as soon as they see you, they give you a bad look.

A lot of respect.

Yes, a lot.

So, explain to me a bit about the grades.

So, how it works is...

In Jiu-jitsu it begins on the white belt, but when you are a child
you go through other belts that the adults don't.

Which are the infant belts, they are the white belt first,
then the gray belt, then the yellow belt.

These are the infant belts. Yellow, orange and green.
Once we get to green, it begins the adult belts.

In that case it's the blue belt, then the purple, then the brown and the black.

On each belt you gain a grade for the time you are in it. For example, I am on brown for two years. First year is brown, second year is brown two grades, and the third year, which I am right now, four grades.

And by the end of it I become a black belt.

Understand?

Yes.

In blue it's the same thing: blue, one grade, two grades, three grades, four grades.

So blue and brown...

Blue? No, all the belts.

All of them?

White, gray, yellow...

All of them have grades?

Yes, all of them have grades in Jiu-jitsu.

Then it depends on your age, or in Jiu-jitsu when you are an adult it depends on you efficiency, because when you are an adult it's your master who does your graduation.

There's is a certain time defined by the CBJJ, the Brazilian Jiu-jitsu Confederation.

For blue it's two years, purple it's two years, brown is one year,
and black you can stay in for more time. And that's it.

But I've been doing Jiu-jitsu for 20 years, so I went through
all the belts: white, gray, yellow, orange, green, blue...

Purple, brown, and now this year, if God helps me, I will conclude reaching the black.

And that's it, let's keep going.

It's hard, huh?

Yeah, 20 years.

A whole life of work.

A whole life of work, exactly.

Do you want to be champion of something? What are your dreams?

Man, really, as I said, sincerely my dream isn't being world champion, being a world champion will be a consequence of my work and my effort.

It won't be something that I want because I want to be, it will be because I've been consistent in this project and became champion.

But my idea is, my brother, keeping the kids off the streets,
you know, creating a social project, moving it forward.

Letting some cool kids from the favela evolve mentally, you know?

Understanding better how life is, that life inside the favela isn't a thousand stars but we can live and we can strive for something better.

Because this is very hard here in the community, for the children to recognize that they can do something, that they can be something, understand?

And this is something that I really know how it is, my brother.
Plenty of times in my head I thought I wouldn't be a Jiu-jitsu teacher.

Like, my dream is to be a Jiu-jitsu teacher, but my dream is to be a Jiu-jitsu teacher to the kids of the favela, of my color, for real.

I teach lessons to children where I work,
I teach children of famous people, children of mega businessmen,

it is what I like, I adore educating people, being with them there and teach that a black person there also has a leadership position.

It is also very representative to me to be there at the gym, teaching the kids, you know?

Even though they don't have that notion... There is a difference of lifestyles, for example, they don't imagine that I live at the favela, that I live with a lot of hardships.

And they have a different life, and they could understand and interpret that not every black person they come across in their lives are going to harm them.

That's what I want to be able to identify and show everyone,
that, my brother, you have to forget that...

Ah, brother, I'm a kid from the favela and I can't be a football player, I can't be a businessman, I can't own a shop. You have to study, you know?

You have to chase your dream. I've been chasing my dream for 20 years and it looks like it didn't come true, it looks like it won't come true.

Like, my head, there will be times that it will say 'Igor, now it's the time'. Such is life, you know, highs and lows. I think that's it.

I have to be consistent in my dream because my dream will make the dreams of many others come true, that's what I want. I don't want to be a world champion.

I want to make dreams come true, I want children happy with their lives, children that can...

Wow, man.

Always know what they want, you know?
That's it, I don't want much, I don't want money.

I already have a house, thank God, my mother and father gave me a house so I can strive and have my own things.

From here on out it's the achievements, it's what comes as consequence, as I say. It's not what I want, it's the consequence of what I've been working and searching for.

And if I get rich one day, thank God, it will be helping the kids of my favela. It will be like this: I want to be great, but I want to be great to my area.

You know?

Wow, man.

I don't want to be great to the world, no, the world is the world. But my area knows me since I was a child, and, like...

And I want to show them that we can do much more than people think.

It's very hard for the people of the favela to go do Jiu-jitsu, isn't it?

Yeah, not only Jiu-jitsu.

Everything, football, everything.

They live suffering, you know?

Jiu-jitsu is expensive, huh? How much does the gym costs here in Rio?

The gym where I used to train cost R$300, there was
zero possibility of my parents affording the gym.

Thank God, I've had a resident here of Vidigal, who was Yula, I can't forget to talk about her, she was a very special person in our family.

She put me, my brother Yago, my older brother, in Jiu-jitsu.

Through her putting us in Jiu-jitsu and making that connection between me and LeÃ£o Teixeira, which is my old school, that I'm very grateful for,

it taught me to be the guy I am today, along with
my master Aureo, who is at Renzo Gracie now.

That's why you have that possibility now.

Exactly, thanks to LeÃ£o Teixeira, they gave me the opportunity to build a mental, financial and physical stability, which I am very thankful for,

for LeÃ£o Teixeira, my old school, and Yula, who put me in this project at LeÃ£o Teixeira.

Normally the people here can't afford that.

No, there's no way.

R$300 per month.

There's no way.

How much is the monthly wage of the people here in the favela?

The minimum wage here in Brazil is between 1000 and 1200.

1000.

Yeah, and then you think: for a person to eat, to buy their food, it's hard.

With R$500 you don't make the groceries, the basics, rice and beans, it's R$700.

And then you have to pay the rent...

It's expensive.

Yeah.

Hello guys, I'm sitting with the master of the gym here.

Aureo Couto, you guys can follow him on Instagram.

Say a few words about the gym, about yourself, and also about your experience with Igor.

Right. So, I've been teaching Jiu-jitsu for over 23 years, right?

But our gym here is two and a half years old. Igor trained with me since he was 5,

through a social project we had at the other gym. And since he was little he stood out, winning some brazilian championships, state championships here in Rio.

How many brazilian championships did you win?

Around 4 or 5.

4 or 5 brazilian titles as a kid, and he started to stand out,
started teaching alongside me at the other gym too,

then he stopped, he started working with other things and such. Then when we opened the Renzo Grancie here in Ipanema,

with the increase in demand, we had a lot of new students enrolling at the gym, now the gym is, thank God, a success, representing one of the biggest gyms in the world here in Rio de Janeiro,

the Renzo Gym is already consolidated up there in the United States, and with the increase in students we took the opportunity.

Igor already trained with me, I knew of his competency, so I invited him to stand alongside me working with us, and doing this project we are doing with children, adults, women.

I can only thank the great master here. Without him, my brother, I wouldn't be half the man I am today. After my father was gone, he is the one who became a father, really.

His wife who is also a great mother, all the family have always accepted me.

And not only him, but his older brother also practices,
he is also a brown belt, Yuri.

My brother.

This is fruit of his work, of his competency, understand?

Now he is here and he is one of the main teachers at the gym.

Tell a message, in general.

Practice Jiu-jitsu, understand?.
It is the best thing in the world. Jiu-jitsu saves.