

Brandon Tzib transcript

Brittany Brown: [00:00](#) I'm now recording and today is December first and I am interviewing Brandon for my honors thesis research titled Latino South Race and Racialization. So we'll go ahead and jump right in. Are you 18 years or older?

Brandon Tzib: I'm 18 years older.

Brittany Brown: Okay. And can you say and spell your first and last name for the record?

Brandon Tzib: [00:23](#) My name is Brandon Tzib.

Brittany Brown: [00:29](#) Okay, and when were you born?

Brandon Tzib: [00:32](#) I was born in July 13th, 1994.

Brittany Brown: [00:36](#) And um, where are you from and where did you grow up?

Brandon Tzib: [00:39](#) I'm originally from Claremore, Oklahoma, but, um, I did most of my childhood in Pontotoc, Mississippi.

Brittany Brown: [00:46](#) And when did you, when did your family moved from Oklahoma to Mississippi?

Brandon Tzib: [00:50](#) Um, why? Uh, they moved from Oklahoma to Pontotoc when I was two months old and the reason they came to Mississippi was my uncle was a pastor, so my dad wanted to move with him as well, not the same building but, you know, I moved to the same place.

Brittany Brown: [01:07](#) And um, so you've only lived in Oklahoma and Pontotoc?

Brandon Tzib: [01:11](#) Yeah, I guess I still claim Oklahoma even though I haven't lived there that long, but yeah, Pontiac I will claim as my home.

Brittany Brown: [01:18](#) Okay. And uh, what brought you from Pontotoc to Oxford?

Brandon Tzib: [01:23](#) Um, well at the time I was picking colleges and I've always followed the footsteps of joining the bandwagon of becoming a Mississippi State fan and by my senior year I decided to get more depth into finding college. So Ole Miss was the first one that accepted me, so I just like, let's go for it.

Brittany Brown: [01:43](#) Is race an important part of your identity? Why or why not?

Brandon Tzib: [01:50](#) Um, honestly it's half and half. Yeah, it is important. But then again, uh, I see no reason, uh, I've always grew up in a Christian home so mom always taught me that everyone is equal, so I just look at everyone based on their heart and not by skin.

Brittany Brown: [02:07](#) Cool. And how, how has your experience been at Ole Miss and living in Oxford?

Brandon Tzib: [02:12](#) Uh, it's been pretty great so far. Um, I've always been an energetic person outside of a class and doing serious work with school and stuff. Um, Oxford has been a great, great time for me, especially with football season while the success, what we had in the past couple of years.

Brittany Brown: [02:31](#) What is your major classification and some notable involvement that you have on campus?

Brandon Tzib: [02:37](#) I was a nursing major. Um, I guess you could say still is. I'm trying to wait to get into the program which requires a bachelor's degree accelerated program, but right now officially it's a psychology major with a minor in Spanish.

Brittany Brown: [02:53](#) And um, what is your classification and then maybe some things you were involved in on campus?

Brandon Tzib: [02:58](#) Uh, I'm a senior or I guess you could say fifth year. Um, my involvement on campus, uh, I worked for the Turner Center, the campus recreational, building a, I'm a facility manager there. At one point there was a transfer mentor group where transfers came to a university and I will help out with that one. I'm also, I was part of the BSU. I was part of the oldest ultimate Frisbee club team. Um, I believe that's it so far. W

Brittany Brown: What are the most important aspects of your life right now and why?

Brandon Tzib: [03:33](#) The most important one's to graduate, that's the most important one. Um, and yet after that next semester I'll try to do my best to find a job so I can have it lined up after graduation. Right now at this point is just a setting a goal or plan on finding a job is the most important aspect right now.

- Brittany Brown: [03:51](#) Okay. And now we're going to get into some more questions about race and identity. So the US Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity as two different concepts. What is your ethnicity?
- Brandon Tzib: [04:02](#) So, um, my ethnicity, um, my parents are from Belize, so you know it's starting to become a popular place to tour. Um, but for my ethnicity it will be believed to be American since I was born in America.
- Brittany Brown: [04:19](#) What are your parent's nationality and do you identify with your nationality?
- Brandon Tzib: [04:28](#) Uh, my parent's nationality, like I said before, they're from Belize so, uh, they're Belizean or I guess in the term as um, the people I believe they call themselves Belizean. Um, the, um, do I identify with my parent's nationality? Uh, yes.
- Brittany Brown: [04:47](#) And, um, for people who don't know, like where is Belize and what is the culture of Belize like?
- Brandon Tzib: [04:53](#) So, um, normally, um, people won't know where Belize is at or what Belize is, uh, normally, um, if you pick out a, a Spanish culture place like Mexico, everyone knows it automatically. Literally it is right below Mexico. Literally. It's right below Mexico. And was the other question. I'm sorry, what is the culture like? So what I found out the culture in Belize, um, it's an English speaking country. Uh, there's a, there's a couple of Spanish places where, or places that they speak Spanish and where my dad is from, uh, San Pedro. They speak Spanish and Creole there. So just a mixture of languages. Also there's broken English called Creole. So my mom grew up in a place where English was just spoken. Dad grew up in a place where he spoke more than two languages or two languages. My dad speaks of course English, Spanish and Mayan, which is an old language that is really hard to learn.
- Brittany Brown: [06:00](#) And how do you identify racially and why?
- Brandon Tzib: [06:08](#) Um, racially I identify myself as a Latino American. And why do I identify this way? Um, it's who I am. Literally, I don't want to lie about who I am. I don't want to say I'm Caucasian when I'm not really not.

- Brittany Brown: [06:24](#) And do you identify as Hispanic or Latino? And do you have a preference of term? Why? Why not?
- Brandon Tzib: [06:31](#) I'm a, I consider myself both because I say I'm Hispanic. Uh, yes because I'm from a Spanish cultural place. Um, however a Latino, I see Latino as someone who's born in America or who's born from a different place who speaks the language, English. And that's also from another Spanish speaking country.
- Brittany Brown: [06:59](#) Studies show that the Latino population is growing in the US. How do you think this will affect the way race or race relations was viewed in this country?
- Brandon Tzib: [07:09](#) I actually did a research paper on this a couple of weeks ago. Um, I, from what I've gathered and in my opinion, um, yes, um, the Latino population will increase by a lot. Um, this is just based on what I read on the Internet, but by 2060, the population will be increased by 43 percent. So, uh, honestly I think, I think there'll be a way it can affect the whole United States because, you know, we're overpopulating too much and it's just hard to get money to build construction on houses and stuff. So, uh, I still think it's a good thing that we're growing, but yet, you know, give time for the other people to come, you know.
- Brittany Brown: [07:58](#) How do you maintain your Latino culture while being a student here?
- Brandon Tzib: [08:03](#) Um, at first I didn't really acknowledge my, my culture because, uh, uh, honestly I really want it to be the better. I wanted to let people know that I wanted to be the same as everyone else, like, you know, when they look at me and they like, oh, he's low class and that's why I had that mentality of motivation to like try and be better than that person. I know it was kind of selfish, but like at one point, um, I just came to realization was like, it's not who I am it's about, you know, about doing what I can to change the world. So, um, yeah, uh, I embrace the, uh, the culture and where I'm from and because when I tell them people are fascinated to hear about it, so that kinda brought me more, uh, more joy to talk about it. So I embrace it. Um, so if people come up to me and ask what are you, yeah, I find that kind of rude, but then again, you know, it's, it's a cool way for them to know what I am that. You typically don't get the, like the normal answer like Mexican or Spaniards.

So when I tell them I'm a different type of race or I guess you could say a nationality, um, they will be like, oh, what's that? You know, they bring up all these questions, then you start talking about the culture and the place that they've never heard of. So that brings more people to attract and I just find that pretty cool.

Brittany Brown: [09:26](#)

And are there any other ways that you hold onto your culture? Maybe like through language, food?

Brandon Tzib: [09:32](#)

Um, yeah. So, uh, like I said earlier, um, when I tell them that Belize is not only a Spanish speaking country, but like, the most dominant language is English. Um, they start, they start asking me questions where, where'd you learn Spanish and all this stuff. So I learned Spanish in high school and so, uh, now that I've gotten a little better at it now between that gap between senior year and I say sophomore, junior year in college, um, I never really spoke the language Spanish that much. So when I decided to become a Spanish minor, I'm like, that's where I decided I'm starting to embrace it. I was starting to talk about Belize. I'm starting to talk about all the culture because in Belize we have the food is what I love the most. We have carne asada which is like thin steak and then with cilantro on top. And uh, we have flour tortillas homemade instead of corn tortillas, like the people in Mexico, uh, we also have Johnny Cake, which is like a sour dough bread. There's just many terms for it. But other than that, um, I do like the culture yet and haven't visited yet. I would like to go.

Brittany Brown:

Do you cook any of the foods?

Brandon Tzib:

Uh, normally I, to be honest, I don't cook it at my house because I don't have the materials. Uh, wish I knew the proper term for the equipment they used that my mom uses the kitchen. But, uh, every time I go to the house I always tell her, make me a batch of flour. Homemade tortillas or, you know, et cetera.

Brittany Brown:

Um, and earlier you said when people look at you, they see you as a lower class. Why do you say that? What are some things that you've gone through that kind of brought you to that conclusion?

Brandon Tzib: [11:18](#)

Well, I mean like, I mean back then when, I mean, of course our generation is still evolving. How we see each

other. Back then, you know, it was, it was a really crucial time for racism. So I figured when they look at me or not, when I figured out when I um, experienced that they look at me and uh, of course, yeah, they say certain things, but like I really don't take it as an offensive way because like I said, my parents are uh, we come from a Christian home and like my mom and dad are very humble so they really don't let stuff like that and get to their ego. So like for me just growing up and watching them having to face that, I just want to be able to back them up. Like, Hey, you know, just grow up, don't. If you don't have, you don't, if you don't have nothing, nice to say, don't say it at all. So I just think people just need to mature up a little bit and just worry about what they need to worry about. So when they look at us, I just feel like we're just a normal family, you know, just trying to make it, trying to turn dirt into diamonds, you know. So,

Brittany Brown: [12:21](#) Is that something you would experience like in Pontotoc?

Brandon Tzib: [12:25](#) Well, there wasn't that many racism in Pontotoc. We do have, I would say is, but like there, there are a couple of people that are conservatives that think about or how they see racism differently. So, um, we do, we do try our best to get along with everyone even though we may see a fake smile or a fake personality based on how we hear, hear rumors about someone, but yet like we're still, like I said, we still treat everyone the same no matter how hard they judge us or how bad they talk about us, you know, we're just worrying about how we're going to make it through the next day.

Brittany Brown: [13:02](#) What are some challenges that you face at Ole Miss in Oxford as a Latino student?

Brandon Tzib: [13:11](#) I haven't really faced any challenges that would, uh, impact on my nationality. I'm speaking, uh, besides nationality, the only challenges I face is just having to get past a certain class, like having to pass a certain class or having to go to a or what I'm going to eat the next day, you know, just, just surviving by your own, with a part time job, paying bills or working in another job is really stressful, but yet you're really putting yourself out there and be like, you can actually do this, you know, you actually got a second job so you're actually making it or making somewhat use of it because you only do college one time.

Brittany Brown: [13:59](#) Has anyone ever asked you about your race or ethnicity and how do you typically respond to these questions?

Brandon Tzib: [14:05](#) Uh, yeah, like I said earlier, um, they look at me and they ask me, hey, what are you, because I look at you, you don't look Mexican or I look at you, you don't look Hawaiian or et cetera, et cetera. So I tell them, I was like, uh, I'm just from Pontotoc. Um, I was born in Oklahoma, et cetera, where I'm from, I tell them where I'm from, um, I tell them where my parents are from and, you know, they get, they get, uh, they get happy or they get interested and want to know what. So, uh, because they tell me I was like, you don't have, you don't have the accent or et cetera. So I'm like, you know, it's pretty cool, you know, English was the first language I learned. My parents thought it was a good idea because since back then we were struggling so they wanted me to, uh, me as the oldest child, they wanted me to succeed and help them out in the long run, which I will. So, and then that's where I picked up the language and then of course Pontotoc is still a little small country town. So I kind of picked up on the southern accent a little bit. So it's pretty cool how I can communicate with others.

Brittany Brown: [15:12](#) And do people typically like assume like what your race is or anything? I know you said like people say you don't look Hawaiian or you don't like Mexican. How do people typically ask you? What are you, where are you from, where you really from, like what do people normally do?

Brandon Tzib: [15:28](#) So a perfect example will be if I'm getting to meet someone so if I go up to someone like earlier I think two months ago I went for, I went to a conference for work and Alabama and I met some people and you know, just getting to know some things, you know, one of the questions would be like, where are you from or you know, uh, how are you or et cetera? And one of the questions was, as I was introducing myself, uh, he asked me, where are you from? I told him. I always start out whenever they asked me where I'm from, I always start out. I'm born in Oklahoma. I did most of my childhood Pontotoc, Mississippi. My parents are from Belize so that way it saves them another question to ask. So I just go ahead and tell them right off the bat and then that's where they ask me. Always I either get it, I've heard of that place before, or I've never heard of that place. Where is that? So I go into detail like where it's at, uh, what's, what Belize is then, um, and then they tell me it's funny because

they always asked me. Sometimes they're like, well, you know, it's like you look, you look Hispanic but you can't really tell, you know. So just going off, I hate to say this again, but like stereotypical on how Hispanics dress sometimes, you know, like I said, our generation is evolving. Um, you know, sometimes I just dress what I dress. I mean, yeah, picked it up from, you know, all the kids around me from school, but, you know, I just dressed whatever. I think it's cool to me like, oh, I like this hat or I like those jeans or shoes. So I just put on whatever I put on and then, you know, it's still funny to me that people still see how we were, what we were, how we look, you know, still brings up a pick, a stereotypical idea of like, oh, I wonder what he's so and so it Mexican so, so I just go off and tell them and then no matter if it hurts me or not, I just go out with a smile.

Brittany Brown: [17:20](#)

Have you ever experienced any assumptions about your character? Has anyone ever stereotyped you or assume something about you because of the way you look?

Brandon Tzib: [17:32](#)

Not that I've thought of. I haven't faced a situation like that so far, um, I'm blessed to have all these friends who think that we're all equal. So it's kind of cool because I've had all these friends so I have yet to encounter a situation like that in a long time. But back in, uh, I want to say my fifth or sixth grade year, uh, I did have an encounter with a girl who will not, who I will not name, but she always used to call me shrimp. So based on, you know, my height and stereotypical how Hispanics are. So that really got me, that was my first encounter of having to deal with the situation of someone actually picking on me. So I don't know if it was because of my race or it could have been to someone who was not Hispanic and a small person. So having to deal with that. I cried. Of course, you know, that was my first encounter. So I went and told my mom and my mom is really, uh, she really hates stuff like that. She don't want other people to get. She hates bullies basically is what it is. So I mean, no matter what color you are, if you're bullying somebody else, you know, we, you know, we won't allow that to happen because we want kids to succeed and stuff like that. And that's where depression and stuff like that happens. But we don't want to get into that though, but um, yeah, so I told my mom and mom came up to the school and told the teacher and so after that ended and so that's where I found out, like I got people that care for me even

though my mom's my mom, but, you know, there was other people around me. It was like, hey, we need to help you out. We don't want nothing bad happening.

Brittany Brown:

Do you speak Spanish? If. Yes, how did you learn?

Brandon Tzib:

Uh, I do speak Spanish. I'm still working on it. I'm not fluent yet, but I'm still trying to roll my "R's" still can't do that. Well I picked up the language Spanish in the household, you know, uh, basically in the house. Mom and dad would speak Spanish to each other and of course they will speak English to us, me and my other siblings, my brother and my two sisters. So like I've said I'm the oldest. So they wanted me to speak English. So in Tenth Grade, in 2010, uh, joined the Spanish class, uh, ended up becoming either VP or treasurer for the Spanish club, I can't remember. And so, um, I ended up doing pretty well in that class, came up with an A and then after that I've spoken the language. Of course I speak it sometimes with my parents, you know, just to, you know, have fun with it. And of course, uh, like I said, my uncle was a pastor, came here, so he, uh, he opened up a Spanish church. So that's where I started going to church, but for me it was hard because like I didn't know the language so I would just basically sit in the church just sitting there. So, uh, that's when I came to realization when I found out in Spanish is important. Uh, I told my mom was like, I need to start going to a church where I know the language. Uh, so, uh, I went to a church First Baptist and then I started getting to know more because mom wanted. It was best for me and of course, you know, I needed some Jesus, so, you know, I had to catch up on all that stuff. So it was hard translating a couple of Bible verses. I just repetitively learned back in the church that my uncle taught, so I just, you know, I knew about, I didn't know what it was saying, so I knew the certain word like Genesis and so and so I just remembered a study that because that's what I learned. And then when I got to college I made it my minor and started learning. So I'm making it better. Hopefully, uh, you know, I can help people out, which is a good thing for jobs too.

Brittany Brown:

[21:12](#)

So, um, you said you're the oldest of your siblings, your younger siblings? Do your parents them or were they just pretty adamant about not teaching you all Spanish and wanting you all to be fluent in English?

- Brandon Tzib: [21:27](#) Um, so um, since I've been away from home because of college, I've actually gotten to know how they're, how they're going through their lives or how they're living because I'm not there to see them grow, so I really don't know how they learn Spanish, but they do. They don't speak it a lot like me since I know the language mostly, but they, my brother, he's right where he just don't want to learn it. So, which is a good thing, you know, he makes his own choices, but maybe one day he'll um, he'll learn it just for fun or something, just pick it up a little bit of my sisters that they do tend to pick it up a lot more because they're always with my mom. So mom is always speaking in Spanish on the phone because she's like, she's an interpreter so whenever they're with her she's always on the phone and speaking to somebody in Spanish. So I'm assuming that's how they picked it up. So mom, my sisters would like play around with each other and just say a couple of Spanish words and you know, to us as well.
- Brittany Brown: [22:26](#) And you said your father speaks Mayan as well. Do you know any Mayan or do any of your siblings?
- Brandon Tzib: [22:33](#) Um, uh, it's a funny thing. I looked up a, I used to have the sheet back in the day when I was young. I had a sheet where my dad told me some basic Mayan words, but I don't have that sheet anymore. I lost it. So Mayan was just never an interest in me. But whenever Mayan is spoken from my dad, he only speaks it to his brothers. So out of his six or seven brothers, he, uh, they only speak Mayan to each other whenever we're around, it's like, it's like we have a little click at the house. We had the people who speak to Mayan here and of course mom is helping me, uh, speaking Spanish and then of course my siblings speaking in English. So it's Kinda like having three languages in the same house. So, um, I try to learn it, but it's just a difficult language is just so hard. You have all these pauses and in like each sentence. But at this point I really don't want to learn it.
- Brittany Brown: [23:48](#) And how important has the ability to speak Spanish to the Latino culture?
- Brandon Tzib: [23:55](#) At first it was difficult because, um, I would, I would try to pronounce the words and they will keep asking me why, what were you trying to say? And I'm like, trying my best. So even if I can't roll my R's, they still get the full letters,

the association for it. So I try my best. Like, uh, what's the, what's the word? Like? Like perro, I can't say the double R in that word. I can't trill R's no matter how hard I've tried to get on Youtube, roll my r's. It's still can't do it. But now I can go up to a Mexican restaurant and even though like I said, Hispanic, Hispanic, we like, we look and show this family, say hey, we're in the same boat. Uh, we like speak Spanish to each other. So at first when they used to do that to me, I'll, I'll be like, just a typical hola and now they look at me. I keep, I can keep a conversation going on there, but there are some words that I really don't know yet to complete the sentence. So I just tried try my best to let them know how I'm saying or what I'm trying to say.

Brittany Brown: [25:00](#)

So. And I'll combine the next two questions. How does the university and the community both cater to and omit the Latino population?

Brandon Tzib: [25:10](#)

So, uh, I noticed that in March. Was it March? I want to say it's March that we have the Hispanic heritage month. I don't know if it's march. Could Be September, I should say. I'm still trying to embrace the Hispanic culture and learn more, but uh, yeah, I think that's pretty cool. Uh, they have a thing called the Latin club. I want to say it's a Latin club where, um, we have, uh, they have tons of Hispanics just joined a club and don't have to be Hispanic. They can be Brazilians or a Cubans or anybody that speaks the language Spanish or somewhat close to it and joined the club and you don't have to be Hispanic to join the club. There are a Caucasians, African-Americans, Chinese, et cetera, et cetera because it's a fun club. Um, they do host parties at the lyric, the Latin party. Those are pretty fun. Basically it's just a party where you just go in, you can learn the Latin dances as basically Spanish music party. Um, I think that you never see helps out with that because we want, want all sorts of ages and races come to the university. Um, I think that's just pretty cool.

Brittany Brown: [26:22](#)

How do you view race in the US? In the south and here in Oxford?

Brandon Tzib: [26:28](#)

I would say in the south this is a pretty difficult, um, yeah, there are still some towns, there are still some people that, um, that are racist. Um, but yet, uh, like I said earlier before, we just need to mature up and, you know, just worry about what they need to worry. And um, I mean

there are some instances if we're on their property without knowing and they tell us some to get off, you know, we will, but they don't have to use a certain term to identify us to leave. At Ole Miss, uh, I see it as a big problem still with African Americans and racism. Uh, I still, I still see that as big of a big deal as them trying to take the statues and stuff like that. So I try to help out my friends, you know, that I tell them like, I'm always gonna be there for you, you know, and uh, what, uh, in the United States, you know, they're still, they're still trying to build a wall, which, you know, um, I don't want to get into politics, but, you know, it's just, it's just a difficult time for, for each race to be honest. We, we each have our own situations.

Brittany Brown: [27:50](#)

And um, how do you perceive the Latino population affecting the idea of race in the south?

Brandon Tzib:

Honestly, I don't see it being a big deal. I just see us working hard. I just see a lot of people. Honestly, I don't see the, uh, Latino population that's a big deal that I've encountered or experienced or seen. I just see us all together working, to be honest, we're always working, to be honest. I really don't see nothing, but other than that, I mean we're just, we're just here trying to live in south. I enjoyed the south, I love the south. It's just a just a country, country-mannered place.

Brittany Brown: [28:43](#)

And are there any other topics or points that you'd like to discuss that I didn't ask you?

Brandon Tzib:

You did wonderful.

Brittany Brown:

Okay. All right.