

Gabriela Altieri transcript

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) I'm recording. So today is November 28th. Uh, we are located in the student media center. And Bishop Hall, I'm interviewing Gaby Altieri for the purpose of my honors thesis title, the Latino Style, race and racialization. Alright, so we'll jump right in. Are you 18 years old or older?
- Speaker 2: 21 years old.
- Speaker 1: And can you state and spell your first and last name for the record?
- Speaker 2: [00:23](#) Gabrielle Altieri
- Speaker 1: When were you born?
- Speaker 2: March eight, 1997.
- Speaker 1: And uh, where are you from and where did you grow up?
- Speaker 2: Okay, so I was born in Memphis, Tennessee. Uh, because my parents lived in Hernando, Mississippi. I was born three months early, one pound, 11 ounces. Um, so I lived three months of my life in the hospital in Memphis, but then I lived for the next three years in Hernandez and then my dad's job got moved to brand or like the Jackson area. So we live in brandon now. And um,
- Speaker 1: [01:07](#) have you lived in any other places beside, besides Fernando and now I'm a Mississippi girl. What brought you from Brandon to us for?
- Speaker 2: [01:17](#) Well obviously school almost was the only place I looked at to go to school. Um, so yeah, I visited, I toured here my junior year and I fell in love like once you come and take a tour here and you're going to come here. That's. Yeah. So,
- Speaker 1: [01:31](#) and is race an important part of your identity? Why or why not?
- Speaker 2: [01:38](#) I guess I would say more ethnicity and less race. Um, just because like growing up, like going through like history class and stuff like you learned about like, like the American ideals of race. Um, so like white versus black and I didn't fit in any of those. Um, so I was really

confused, like in the first grade I asked my teacher, I was like, I don't like where do I fit in? And she was like, well, your people weren't here yet. No, it's like, okay. But I just didn't know what to do. Um, so more ethnicity, like more of my white cultural background. Being Puerto Rican, um, is more of a like every day important thing in my life. I should probably stop clicking this button, um, and less of like race because race is subjective basically wherever you go. Because like in Puerto Rico I'm considered white, but here I'm not considered why? So yeah. Interesting.

Speaker 1: [02:38](#) Can you talk about maybe some personal experiences you've had with like being here in the states, you're considered white, but back on the island you're, I mean, I'm sorry, not considered white and on the island you're considered, have you had any personal, I guess encounters or experiences with that?

Speaker 2: [02:54](#) So basically I was very confused when I was in like elementary, um, because like you fill these forms out, like for the Mtt, which is like Mississippi curriculum test or something, it's like the act, but for like elementary school, I don't know, you fill out these forms and it's like your race and it had white, black, other. So I was like, okay, I guess I'm other. And then my, I would come home and my parents were like, no, you're not other, you're white. And I'm like, no, I'm not. I'm not white. Like I'm not like my best friend Joe. Like I'm not her. And so then we had to like go through this whole thing and basically like I had to like learn I guess like what I was um, because I always just saw myself as Puerto Rican. Obviously that was an option on the paper.

Speaker 2: [03:36](#) Um, so yeah, I think that is kind of difficult. And then also just like, um, like in Puerto Rico it's like, it's kind of just like a melting pot. And so because of the history of Puerto Rico, so like slavery happened in Puerto Rico hundreds of years before slavery even happened in the United States. And so by the time slavery was happening in the United States, everyone in Puerto Rico's already mixing and so everyone is just kind of like a whole bunch of just stuff. So like in Puerto Rico we consider ourselves white, African and indigenous and we don't really like, like now there's like ancestry.com and you can like see like I'm 25 percent Irish and whatever like that. It's not a thing in Puerto Rico, like everyone is Puerto Rican, you're white, black and

indigenous. And that's just how it is. And like I'm considered why because I'm like fairer, but like my cousin who's like a few shades darker than me, it's like considered three Ganja, which is like mixed I guess.

Speaker 2: [04:44](#) And then I also have cousins that are like black, so, but here they're not considered black. Well because they've come and visited me and people are like, like some of my black friends are like, oh yeah, no, they're not black. And I'm like, they're the same skin color as you like, yes, they're black. And they're like, no, because in their mind black means African American. But in Puerto Rico black is like your skin and not necessarily like your culture because we all have the same culture and hear the phrases have different cultures. Like black food is way different than white food. And like black music is everything. Why Music? But in Puerto Rico it's like you all have the same culture, that same food, the same like religion, like education, history, you're just different shades. So I. But I think that's difficult with like any place where there's a lot of people coming from different places because like in the United States we have literally people from everywhere. So it's hard to like mix like that. I don't know now, what is the term that is used in Puerto Rico to identify someone who is mixed or would you say about it? Yeah. Um, or they didn't say like, um, like Mestizo is like more of a South American, but yeah, I'm Puerto Rican. Yeah. Yeah. And um, how long have you,

Speaker 3: [06:10](#) your experience been at the university and living in Oxford?

Speaker 2: [06:13](#) Um, it's been really cool. I like, and Brandon, I'm one of like very little amount of Latinos in my hometown at all. Um, and here there's a lot more Latinos here. Um, so I really liked that. And also like in my home, I'm Catholic, so my hometown, we don't even have Catholic church in my hometown, so we have to drive 20 minutes to go to church and hear this Catholic church right by the school. That's really nice. Um, I don't know. I love will miss. I would live in Oxford forever if I could. So yeah, I love it here. And what is your major classification and some involvement? Yeah. Um, okay. So I'm a political science major with a double minor in Spanish and journalism. I'm a senior. Oh Gosh, I cannot, I do not want to graduate. It's fine. Um, my involvement, um, I'm a member of Alpha Omicron Pi

Sorority. I was their vp of chapter development. Um, I'm also on ASB. Yeah. What's your position in? I'm on the board for Cross cultural engagement and inclusion. Cool. And um, what are the most important aspects of your life right now and why? Oh Gosh. Um, I guess. Oh Gosh, I don't know. Um,

- Speaker 2: [07:38](#) I don't know, I guess, uh, well right now I'm really like Thai, struggling to balance like going to school and applying to law school. Um, so that's, I guess an important aspect of my life. I don't know. I guess, I don't know. What do you mean by that? Like what's most important to you right now? What's most important to me right now? Getting into law school, that is the most important thing to me right now. I mean obviously like health and whatever family, you know, that stuff's important. But yeah, my goal right now is to get into law school and I'm not more
- Speaker 1: [08:11](#) a few questions about your identity. Um, so the US Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity. It's two different concepts. What is your ethnicity?
- Speaker 2: [08:19](#) Uh, so I'm Latina or a Puerto Rican or now they use lots. Um, so yeah.
- Speaker 1: And what is your parents' nationality do you identify with your nationality?
- Speaker 2: So my parents, this is kind of weird, just Puerto Rico is owned by the United States. Um, so technically their nationality is American, but I think they would more identify as being Puerto Rican. Um, and yeah, I do identify like if someone asked me like what are you? But also I hate that, but someone does ask me what I am versus I am human and then I say I'm Puerto Rican. I'm. So, yeah, I definitely do identify with their nationality.
- Speaker 1: [08:59](#) And um, how do you identify racially and why?
- Speaker 2: [09:03](#) Um, so I guess racially I'm white but I don't really identify with like the white American culture. Um, so I normally just say like I'm Puerto Rican and that just kinda like sums it all up. Um, because yeah, I don't really identify as like, like my family hasn't been here for years and like I don't know, like I don't have this strong history and Mississippi or in the United States. So I guess that's why I don't identify

as white because. Yeah. But technically on paper I am white. So

Speaker 1: [09:42](#) um, you know, there was some type of demographic form put in front of you. You have to pick one. But like the options were the typical options you'd like white, black, Hispanic Slash Latino, Asian, native American, you know, what would you typically be?

Speaker 2: [10:03](#) I would normally pick if they were all in a group like that I would pick a Latino or Hispanic. Um, but now I know like on a lot of the forums it's like white, non Latino and then white by itself. And then there's another column that says what's your ethnicity? And that's when you can put Latinos. So that instance I would put white and then Latino. Yeah.

Speaker 1: [10:24](#) But you feel that you're strong more strongly identify with Being Latina? What?

Speaker 2: [10:30](#) Yes. Just, yeah, I guess based on like America's history, I don't know. Yeah, I don't identify with like the white, like experience, but also a lot of times I do get mistaken as being just like normally white because also I'm from Mississippi. I was born and raised here and I have like a little bit of a southern accent. Some people would say, some people say I don't tell, who knows, um, but I do identify with being southern also. Um, so that's kind of like a, like a jumbled, I don't know, math, I don't know. Um, because like obviously I'm not black and I'd also don't look indigenous. Um, even though I do have indigenous people in my family, I don't look like, like I like Indian, like a lot of South American people look Indian. I didn't look like that. So I do get like mistaken as being, um, like white American I guess. Um, but I guess it's different in whatever circle I'm in because like if I'm in a circle of like, like here, don't miss like my sorority sisters, I'm not like the Alexa, I'm Latino there, but in like a group, like we have a lot families that we're friends with and like the Jackson area and we're all from different Latin American countries. Then that aspect, how it'd be white. So I guess it just depends on the group of people I'm with.

Speaker 3: [12:07](#) Yeah. Like your experience I guess with like your race fluctuating simply by what group you're in, do you think that plays into the idea that race itself is a social construct? Like race isn't really real? I totally agree. Yeah.

Speaker 2: [12:23](#) Yeah. Race is literally made up in my opinion. Um, because I think more people identify with the way they were raised, like their culture. Um, whereas like their race, like it's just something that, it's like a phenotype. It's just genetics because I identify as being Puerto Rican, not because of my blood is Puerto Rican, but because I was raised in a Puerto Rican household. Um, whereas like I know one of the families I babysit for and my mom's are friends with their, it's a Colombian woman and her husband is white from Philadelphia, Mississippi and their kids identify as Columbia and they are not just Colombian Colombian Pan American, but they identify as Colombian because of the way their mom has raised them and they speak Spanish and so I think it more determines based on your culture. But yeah, I think it is like race is just because like what are you going to do?

Speaker 2: [13:28](#) Like go up to someone and be like, no, you're not tan enough so you're not Latina. Like my mom is really pale and blonde and she's 100 percent Puerto Rican. And so I think that's also like kind of the like ignorance I guess of the American culture is that it has to do with like a lot of media and representation because like in media, like do you think of a Latino, you think of like Sofia Vergara and Jennifer Lopez. And then if for a guy you think of like George Lopez and like not every Latino looks like that at all. So trying to break through that and show people that I guess is important and it shows that like your ethnicity is most socially, being Latina is way more important than your actual race and you identify as Hispanic or Latino. I do Latina. Um, just because, um, in my, like, I don't know, I've always just been Latina and also from this is from my parents. Hispanic was a word that was created by the US government, um, to mean Spanish speaking and it doesn't really encompass our whole culture and also like technically Hispanic means Spanish speaking. So that means people from Brazil or not Hispanic or Latino. So having to like, I guess. Yeah. But yeah, Latino.

Speaker 1: [15:00](#) So a study showed that the Latino population is growing in the US. How do you think this will affect the way race or race relations is viewed in this country?

Speaker 2: [15:09](#) I think it definitely will affect it immensely. Um, because while that's a really good question. Okay. So, um, are like as Latinos, our demographic, it's very strange to the US

political system. I like wrote a paper on this earlier, so I'm like going crazy now. Um, we are like generally very like religious being Catholic, conservative, um, but then we normally end up voting Democrat, um, because of the history of the two parties and like the way the immigration system is working on right now, Republicans aren't really a working forest there. So, uh, yeah, so I think that will change the whole way politics in this country will work because a lot of Cubans are republican because of, um, like Ronald Reagan helped. Oh, like liberate Cuba. And then also JFK did the Bay of Pigs and that ended horribly for Cubans, so they don't really trust the Democratic Party.

Speaker 2:

[16:24](#)

Um, so yes, but back to race relations, I just got on politics. That's fine. Um, I think historically like where Latinos ended up going as an major majority like black neighborhoods, um, and so a lot of people are mixed like Latino and black. Um, and I feel like that will change, that has changed the race relations in the US and it will continue to keep changing the race relations. Um, because Latinas, most Latino at all attentive people in our countries, we tend to mix more than in the United States and so we don't really like when you like to like date someone or marry someone. It's not like, oh, he's black or he's white just like he's a cool guy. And so like breaking down this racial barriers and then obviously you have kids who are products of the interracial or inter ethnic marriage or relationship and so those kids will be mixing, their kids will be next and the would like to just like fall completely.

Speaker 2:

[17:31](#)

Um, I also think it will change like the culture of the United States, um, being that like all, like even with music and stuff you hear like a lot of artists are like collaborating with Spanish artist and like we're very tight knit market to like advertise to like create things for. Because we consume a lot of media. Like we're the number one people that go to the movies in case you didn't know. Um, and so I think the whole like identity of racism in this country, it's going to start changing with more Latinos coming. Yes, and how do you maintain your Latino culture while being a student? Um, I guess, well it's like my everyday life. I don't really like think about maintaining it just because it's like I've had to do it my whole life. I'm like in my hometown there's no Latino. So having to like continually continuously like remind yourself like, like you are awesome and you were Latina, like you can kill it.

Speaker 2: [18:41](#) And also just like not being afraid to talk about it. Like I talk about Puerto Rico to everyone. Um, even if they get an order with me I don't care because it's like something important in my life and the people that I'm really close with here and like really good friends with, they like hearing about it because they know that it's like something really important to me. So yeah. But I guess just like I called my parents a lot and that's like our, like Latino culture's a lot different than American culture in the sense where we're very close with our families. Um, and so a lot of my friends, like they don't call their parents for like weeks and over here calling my mom like six times a day. Um, and that's not weird to me at all because that's just how I was raised. Um, and like my parents come in for everything, like if I have like pneumonia, my mom's, she's here.

Speaker 2: [19:33](#) Um, so I guess just like keeping close contact with my family. Um, and then my aunt, she only lives 45 minutes away, my mom's sister and Hernandez. So I go see her a lot too, I guess. Yeah. And um, what are some challenges you face as a university? As a Latino? Um, I just think lack of representation on our campus for, sorry, my eyes itching, um, for Latinos as a whole is something that I have seen and that's kind of why I joined the ISP board for inclusion and cross cultural engagement. Um, because a lot of where like one of, I think we are the smallest minority demographic on this campus and so it is hard to find people to go out for like orientation leader or like columns and stuff like that. Um, and so and also we don't have like a strong alumni networks like the black alumni network.

Speaker 2: [20:30](#) They have a very strong alumni, um, and we don't really have as many, um, like Latino alumni and also a lot of our alumni are not from Mississippi and so they leave and they don't really come back to like contribute to the university. Um, and that way. But I just think yeah, like lack of representation and also just like, like I would have loved to take like a Latino studies class and we don't offer that here and because there's not like a demand for it as much. So I guess like trying to recruit more Latinas to come to school here, it would be really cool. Um, but yeah, and I think also just like people not really knowing like a lot of people don't even know where Puerto Rico is on a map or like that it's owned by the United States, not that we're a part of the United States that we are owned by the United States, um,

in like the political atmosphere of that and also just like, um, especially with the, our current political administration and our president. I'm feeling as though the, a lot of people on this campus don't want Latinos here and they don't want immigrants here is kind of disheartening because people are very vocal about it and they don't take the time to like realize or understand exactly what,

Speaker 4: [22:00](#) um,

Speaker 2: [22:02](#) like we go through as a culture, um, because we, like we are parents are completely different culture then what we're going through now. And so having to navigate that is very difficult. Um, because like my parents, they took the act but it wasn't called act was called the college board. And like, it's not like your score matter anything you got, you went and took it and if you pass it you went to college. And so like me even applying to school was like completely out of the spectrum of my parents and both my parents are college educated, but their application whole process was different, like scholarships and stuff. Like in Puerto Rico, most people automatically get the pell grant because of the territory status. Um, and so like me having to find scholarships and like fun and my, like college education, like my parents had no idea what to do. I fill out the FASFA every single year by myself. Like I just, it's a lot different than like some of my friends who their parents went here and they have like a connection here and stuff. Um, but yeah, I guess just like informing people, teaching people like being open and also like realizing that when someone asks you like, Oh, are you Mexican? Or like, do they eat this in Puerto Rico? Like having to think like, okay, they're not coming most of the time they're not coming from a bad place. They're coming from a place of like, they just don't know. And so like educating them and helping them learn will help them then educate someone else if they hear something that's incorrect. So yeah.

Speaker 1: [23:39](#) And um, has anyone ever asked you about your race or ethnicity and how do you typically respond

Speaker 2: [23:46](#) to these questions? I guess like my whole life and also especially when I'm with my parents because my parents have accents. So yeah. So it's, I guess different for every person. Um, so like I remember as like, I'll guess I'll go to the university, um, one time I was in crosby and there was a

ca and she was African American and she did not believe that I was Latino. Um, so she made me take my hair out of my hat and prove that I was Latino, but she like felt my hair, but she was like, you have white hair. And I was like, this is the hair that gets into my head. I don't know what, like lte want me to do, I don't know. And so she made me like, she was like, well, speak Spanish for me. And I was like, okay, but no, because like I don't have to prove to you that I am who I am.

Speaker 2: [24:40](#) Um, so yeah, that was kind of awkward. But also I knew that she wasn't coming at it from like a place of malice. You really just didn't know. Um, and she had never met anyone that was ever from Puerto Rico or that was Latino that probably wasn't like South American. So, um, yeah, I think it is kind of difficult to explain because a lot of people view race and ethnicity as the same thing. And so what I have to explain, like my ethnicity is Latino or Puerto Rican, but my race is white and they're just like, it just doesn't click. And I'm like, okay, what? Like if I'm like, then. So then I'm like, if I'm like two shades darker than you, but all my parents or why, but I'm just darker, what would you say? And they're like, your wife. And I'm like, okay, so am I like white?

Speaker 2: [25:35](#) Meaning European? My, like majority of my heritage is from Spain and Italy, so I'm technically white, but my ethnicity is Latino. And they're like, they just don't get it, but it's fine. I'm a lot of people also like trying to make comparisons, which is like natural for the human brain. Do you always like see something and you want to compare it to something that, you know, to make it easier for you to learn? Um, so a lot of people will come up to me like, oh, do they have tacos in Puerto Rico? And I'm like, no. I'm like, do they eat spicy food? You must love spicy food, like you're Puerto Rican. And I'm like, no, I don't. And so like, but then I just teach them like, no, we are an island so we eat a lot of fish and we don't eat a lot of like spices because like those plants don't grow in Puerto Rico, like in the, like in the soil there's like no.

Speaker 2: [26:33](#) And um, but also I think yeah, just having to explain that to people. Um, but I think it's becoming like less frequent also because I'm becoming more vocal about it so people don't have to ask anymore. I already just tell them. Um, and also like with more Latinos coming in, media and music and

people were like listening, like on top 40 and like bad money's coming up and they're like, what? These guys were in Puerto Rico. Oh my gosh, Gabby, like whatever. Um, so it's like, I guess getting better now. Um, but also within the own, like Latino community. Not Personally, but I know my mom, she's very pale and so like a lot of people will not, like Latinos will not think that my mom is Latina until she starts speaking Spanish. And then they're like, oh shit, you know, so [inaudible] like one time we were in the supermarket and they were talking about like this getting, I like she doesn't know what she's doing and my mom just started to like, look at me and then we started speaking in Spanish and you could see the faces of the people in there. And I was like, yeah. So even in our own culture, um, people have these preconceived notions of what a Latina is. So yeah,

Speaker 3: [27:57](#) it is anyone at breaks. Um, have you ever experienced any assumptions or stereotypes about your character? Because of your perceived race, I guess the example that you gave me.

Speaker 2: [28:06](#) Yeah. And also just like when I, like I was talking to this guy and he was an exchange student from Italy and he was like, Oh, you're Latino, like your spicy. And I was like, I'm, I'm not a food sir. So No. So like a lot of people think like, Oh, you're Latina, you must be really loud, you must have 60 uncles, you must like all live in the same house and like smell like too late. And I'm like, no, that's not true. Um, and also I think like growing up people just assumed that like my parents were like less educated than they were. I'm sorry, I'm like, my one time in the first grade I was taken out of my regular classes and my like advance, we call them venture. It is like critical thinking or something, um, classes. And I was putting an English learning class because they assumed that I didn't speak English well because we had filled out a form and we said that we spoke Spanish at home.

Speaker 2: [29:17](#) And so they assume that I didn't speak very good English and they took me out of my, like rigorous, like because I'm really, I really liked to read and write and so I was in a, like a higher level English class, um, and they took me out of there and put me in the English learning class. But I thought everyone went to an English learning class. I had no idea as naive. And so my mom came to eat lunch with

me in the cafeteria one day and I was like, oh mom, that's my English teacher. And Mom was like, that's why your English teacher, that's not mistaken. And I'm like, no, no, she teaches me English. And Mom was like, what do you mean she teaches you English? And I was like, English, like, like she has little Dora flashcards and we are like, say like his and cat and backed and almost like what?

Speaker 2: [29:59](#)

And they took me out of my class without telling my parents. So then my dad had to go to the school and they assumed that my dad would be, I guess like in a construction uniform. Um, and my dad wears a suit to work every day. He works for them, a superior of narcotics and he was going to court that day, so he really was like in a suit and um, they would come out and check and not see anyone that they thought fit the description of a Latino Dad. And finally when I was like, oh, are you looking for. And they were like, Whoa, frank lte area. My Dad was like, that's me. And they assumed that it wasn't him because of the way he was dressed. Um, and they assume that, like they said to my dad, they're like, well, when people go back to their home country, they lose their English, so we need to like make sure that she's having good English.

Speaker 2: [30:52](#)

And my dad was like, um, what she really needs is a Spanish class. So like if you have a Spanish class, I'll be great. She does not need the English class. And so that was like, I guess the first time people were like made assumptions about me and my family, I guess. Um, but also people just like assume that, um, that like my parents are not here legally, um, which they were born in Puerto Rico, so they are automatically US citizens. Um, whether it seemed like the kids that I babysit her illegal, um, and I'm just like, one, why would you even ask that? So their business and second like take a history class. Um, so yeah, I think and also like going into um, restaurants and stuff have we, like, especially now I guess because of our political climate, I don't know, I'm like if we speak Spanish a lot in the restaurant, people will stare at us and like look like upset that we're speaking Spanish.

Speaker 2: [31:54](#)

And like one time a waitress came over and asked us to be quieter. Um, and so then my mom like went off on this lady rightly so. Um, so yeah, I guess more now and then also people also like assume your political affiliation and like the way you're going to think about everything based on

your race or an ethnicity and people don't really understand that. Yes. Like maybe generally everyone, like who is a certain race or ethnicity votes this way are things this way, but we're all individuals. So like you can have your own thoughts also. So yeah. Do you speak Spanish? If. Yes, how did you learn? Yes. So I do speak Spanish. I'm not as well as I would like to, but I do, um, my parents taught or we spoke Spanish and English in our house, like simultaneously. Um, and when I was younger I gravitated more towards English just because like that's where all my friends spoke and everything around he was in English but then in high school like middle school and high school I started speaking more Spanish and now we mostly speak Spanish with me and my parents.

- Speaker 2: [33:00](#) Um, yeah, it is a learning process. Um, but yeah.
- Speaker 1: [33:08](#) And which line would you, would you, would you say you learned first? You said it was kind of simultaneous under the house?
- Speaker 2: [33:14](#) Yes. Um, it just depends on like certain words. Most of my like, like thoughts and southern English. So I guess like I am a stronger English speaker for sure. Um, and English would be considered my first language because it was my better language, but I did learn them simultaneously. So there were some words like I've went through my whole life and I didn't know the word in English because it's just, we always said it in Spanish. So, um, yeah.
- Speaker 1: [33:43](#) And um, what is do combined? Twenty two. Oh, sorry, 21. How important is the ability to speak Spanish in the Latino culture?
- Speaker 2: [33:53](#) Um, I think it's important, but it's not completely 100 percent, like necessary. I'm like, a lot of kids that I know are like slash babysit. I babysat a lot of Latino children. Um, they, not all of them speak Spanish and I don't think it's anything bad, um, because also like we are becoming a more globalized world in general. So like a lot of their family and friends also speak English even in the country that they live in. Um, and I don't think it's that important to like, it's important I guess like if you're speaking to like your grandparents, um, because like my grandparents didn't know any English except for my grandfather because he was in the military, um, but my other grandparents didn't

really know that much English and so it's important for me to be able to communicate with them in Spanish. Um, but the Latino culture as a whole?

- Speaker 2: [34:51](#) No, I don't think so because you can be 100 percent Latino or Latina without speaking of lick of Spanish because the culture is. And just the language, it's the food, it's the people, it's the dancing, it's the feeling that you get when you see someone from your same country and you're like, oh, we have this in common. Um, so yeah, no, I don't think it's like end all be all. But I do think it aids in your ability to connect with the people with, within your culture. And I think it also aids in the, I guess like your acceptance of other people in that culture. Like, like a lot of my mom's friends, like they want their daughters to speak and their sons to speaking English or Spanish because they want them to be able to go back to their home country and be able to speak with their family. But also I do know a lot of Latinas that their parents didn't want them to speak Spanish at all because their parents were ridiculed for their accent and they didn't want their kids to learn Spanish because they wanted their parent, their kids to be like 100 percent American and not really anything else. Um, so yeah.
- Speaker 1: [36:03](#) Um, and so for somebody to come by in 22 or 23, so how does the university and the community cleaner too and omit the Latino population?
- Speaker 2: [36:12](#) Um, I think there, there's not a lot of catering to you, um, with us just because we're like, you're stronger in numbers and we don't really have a lot of numbers to back us up. Um, but I don't really necessarily think the university like purposely omitted us from anything. I just think that we have not made our presence known enough on this campus so that they start to pay attention. I think now it's happening more. Um, especially like with the boyfriend, collision cross culture engagement. Like we work a lot with the CICC II and they have done a lot for, especially for Hispanic heritage month. I'm like, I was a panelist on a panel for Latinas, that whole mess and like there was like a lot of movies and like panels and discussions and stuff. So that was really cool to see because like out of my whole four years of school, like that was the first time that I saw like a big push to represent our culture here on this campus.

Speaker 2: [37:20](#) Um, but also I think they're like, I feel like there needs to be like a, I don't know, maybe I should do this, like part of the alumni center, like reach out to like Latino Alumni. Um, because we are very passionate people and I think like if we start getting these people involved, we will like be able to create a whole community of Latinos at Ole Miss. I collect old books because I'm a nerd and I was going through and I saw, and one of the yearbooks, like 83, there were six people here from Puerto Rico in 1993, like who would've ever thought until I found these people on facebook, like a psycho. Um, and I messaged them and they were like, oh my gosh, that's so crazy. Like, this is so cool. I haven't been back to almost since I graduated. And like two of these women now now came back for homecoming.

Speaker 2: [38:17](#) And like I got to meet them. They met my family and randomly my, one of my mom's cousins dated this other lady's cousin. So like they knew each other and they didn't realize it. That was Kinda cool. Um, so yeah, I think like getting our alumni involved and like engaged would be really cool. But I don't think the university tries to purposely omit us from the population or the conversation because also it's very different. Like I guess being at Ole miss and I guess being at a different school because almost has a whole history of um, like racial imbalance and injustice. Um, but mainly within the white and black experience and so they really haven't had like to address a lot of racial or ethnic issues with any other kind of culture because we haven't had that long of a history here.

Speaker 2: [39:15](#) And how do you view race in the US in the south and here in Oxford. And I think I'm in the US broadly. Um, race is like white and black and then like everybody else has just clumped up. I'm like, is that another. I guess, um, but I think in the south in particular because of her history, race is a lot more taboo to talk about, um, because like, but also I think it's bad for like northern states to try to forget the fact that they also have a history of racial injustice in their states. But obviously the south is way more. Um, so in the south it's like a lot more difficult I think to like talk about race because people are scared to say things or they're really, really impassioned and they are not scared at all to say things. Um, and so I think people don't want to offend anybody else when they're talking about it.

Speaker 2: [40:22](#) Um, and also like I feel like people, it's just like no one wants to talk about it and that's like, that is not gonna help the issue at all because communication is like what's going to help this racial issue and also like, like in more northern states like you see like white and black people, Latino and Asian, black and Latina like holiday eating and mixing and hanging out and whatever. And in the south it's not like that at all. Like my school was like a public school and a pretty 50 slash 50 like town, like 50 black, 50, white and then like negative one, everyone else. Um, but in our school, like when you would walk into the school, you would come in and there was one side of the school was like where the car riders got dropped off and the other side was where the bus has got dropped off.

Speaker 2: [41:12](#) And if you were white you were just standing by the where the car's got dropped off. If you were black you would just stand by where the buses got dropped off and like if you would sit in the cafeteria, all the white people would sit together and all the black people sit together and it was like no one was telling and he wants to do that. It was just like people did it and no one talked about it and no one thought it was like weird. And that was in my head. I'm like, I'm looking at it and I'm like, this is weird. Like why are we just, why don't we all just sit together as a class? I don't know. Um, and so it's a lot like, I guess like defacto and people I think about like their parents. Like I know my next door neighbor, he was black and his dad was like worked in the bureau with my dad is crazy because they moved there from Ken and we had no idea they were moving in and then we saw them moving in and I was like, Mr Eugene, like what do you live here now?

Speaker 2: [42:07](#) And it's funny now because now they're like Carpool and we have a bromance is whatever. But my neighbor Marcus, he dated a white girl and it was like the talk of the town because he was black into white and his parents were terrified for him to go and meet her parents. And her parents were terrified for her to come meet his parents. And it was like, and they ended up breaking up, but they were really cute couple and like, but it was like everyone talked about it and I am, I just saw that as like why I was there needed to talk about it. They like each other and that's cool. Like if you're going to talk about it like, hey, they're dating. That's so cute. Yeah. But people were like, oh my God, like she's white and he's black. And she had blonde hair and

blue eyes like white, you know? And so that was like, I think it's a lot different, um, like in the south versus in the US because like I went and visited my cousins that live in Boston and in their school, it was amazing. Like there's kids there that speak Portuguese and Mandarin and Spanish and English and there's white kids and black kids and Asian kids and kids from like the Middle East and Australia. And I was like,

Speaker 2: [43:24](#) what? Like if only this was like a Mississippi. Um, but yeah, I think we can't really move forward if we don't address the past. And I feel like a lot of people want to put the past under the rug and not talk about it. Um, I think it's kind of like,

Speaker 2: [43:43](#) it's awkward to talk about race obviously, but it needs to be done and I think it's, I don't know, I find myself like kind of like in a limbo, like middle area because I can talk about it because I don't have any. Like, especially in Mississippi, like I don't have any familiar tie ties here. My family was not here during the civil war or during reconstruction or civil rights movement. So I am looking at it from like a completely unbiased perspective I think. Um, and so I just like, people have, I think like too much like reservations about talking about it because like say like their great grandfather, like thought in the. I don't really, no that's horrible. How long ago? Cause I do know how long ago that was their great, great, great grandfather fought in the civil war and this person might end up getting a black girl and like him thinking in the back of his head like what would my family, you know, like that is like a really big loaded like issue.

Speaker 2: [44:48](#) Um, but yeah, so I think it's very difficult to talk about but also needs to be talked about and it shouldn't be difficult to talk about because it's literally a made up thing. I'm okay in Oxford. I think it's a lot different because we're at a college campus. Um, so I feel like a lot of people are like, like freedom and liberal. I liberate liberation from their parents, you know? So I think a lot more people are like exploring different things, whether that be like drugs and alcohol and stuff or like dating outside of their race. I think that they would have never done in their hometown. Um, so I think that's really cool. Um, and then Oxford, I think it's more of like the Ole Miss Family, whereas like, I don't know, I

don't see like a lot of people at least like students being like really concerned about people's races are.

Speaker 2: [45:47](#)

But I know like a lot of alumni, like you go on game day and you see like, like Colonel Reb and like confederate flags everywhere and you're like, oh, okay. Like, then you have to think like, wow, this is almost like, this is what this school is kind of like revolved around. And so then you have to think like, wow, these people that are bringing all this stuff like they're donating to the university, which means meaning they have power here, which meaning, which means like a lot of the things that a lot of students want to change on this campus is really not going to get done because they don't have the financial backing to support their deals. And so yeah. And um, how do you perceive Latino population affecting the idea of race? Um, I think it definitely will affect the idea of race in the south, just being like, we're new to this area because are new to the United States, but particularly with the history that the south has of segregation, we're new to that.

Speaker 2: [46:48](#)

Um, and so a lot of people, like when my parents came here, a lot of people didn't know where to put them, like what box to put them in. So my parents just was like, well, thrown out the boxes or we're just going to make our own new box. And that is like how they got around and succeeded here. Um, but the idea of race right now, it's definitely like white and black and I feel like now at a lot more Latinas and other cultures, a lot of Asians, like in the delta, like have a huge rise in population are coming to the south and uh, specifically Mississippi because that's where I'm from. So that's what I need to talk about there. We're changing the idea of race because we're breaking down, in my opinion, a lot of those barriers. Um, especially when it comes to like relationships, whether that be like a dating relationship or like a work relationship or a friendship like we, like from our countries, our home countries, um, the idea of like being friends with a black person or a white person.

Speaker 2: [47:54](#)

It's like, that's not a thing. Like you don't go around saying like, oh, I have a black friend. Like, no, you just, I have a friend. And so going, like, I know my mom found it difficult. I get her work when she first started she would go out to talk to people and she wasn't wide enough for the white people, but she wasn't like a minority enough for her

black coworkers. And so I guess people judged her. Um, and so like she's very fair. So they're like, oh, that's a white lady. And then the white women would be like, oh, but she has an accident, you know, so. But then once they get to know, they got to know her, they're like, this is a really chill lady. And I, my mom has brought together a lot of women in her work that probably would not have been friends, um, because she had this kind of outsider perspective.

Speaker 2: [48:42](#) Um, and so I think that's important too, like, so that um, we are changing the idea of race and like, I know like my dad is a lot more. I'm darker skinned than me again, especially then my mom and like one day at work someone was talking, um, and this was like when he was training in the academy, I think someone was like laughing at the joke and it was a black man and my dad was like laughing with him and the black. I looked at him like, why are you laughing with me? Like, you know, you're not one of us. And my dad was like, I'm Brown. Like I'm definitely not one of them. So, you know, and the guy was like, oh yeah. And so like my dad has also helped bring that change into his work too. Um, I think it's important.

Speaker 2: [49:33](#) They both worked for the state of Mississippi. They worked for a public good, which is the whole state. And so getting their ideas of race, I'm like integrated into the state is I think really cool and like, I know like they have like a lot of people have seen them in their jobs and wanted to like be like them. And so like now there's way more Latinos that work for the state now than ever. And like a lot of them put on their application. Like I saw Frank Altieri at a conference and I was like, I want it to be like him or like they're like Wendy, she works in our community and we see her, like doing good for everyone, not just her own culture. And so we want to be a part of that change. And so I think, um, yeah, I think we really will change the way racist here and also just the way like, um, like our culture is viewed.

Speaker 2: [50:31](#) Like when my parents came here, there was like no, like any kind of remnants of any kind of failure that was remotely Latino. Now there's like 20,000 Mexican restaurants everywhere you go. Um, so I think it would definitely affect that, like the consumer and the political nature of the south, which will also affect the way people

are treated because once you let your voices be heard, um, whether that be like voting or marching or whatever, um, people start to listen and once they realized like, oh, there's a growing number of Latinos in this area, like those are my constituents. I have to serve these people to the whole makeup of the community will change. Um, and I think also like in general, our generation is a lot more, like we're a lot more open. Like I don't know, like I've never seen except for Marcus his case, but that was mostly like older people gossiping in our town. I'm like, we don't really look at, like when we're dating, we're like, oh, I have to date someone who's white or someone who's Latino or someone who's black or whatever. So I think that like our generation is a lot more open. So we will contribute to like the racial barriers being broken down.

Speaker 2:

[51:52](#)

Um, challenges or were there any other points or topics that you discuss? You know, you're pretty thorough. Um, yeah, I just think that by our population is growing and so people are going to start having to listen. Um, because we are voters and we are consumers and so by our population growing, we will be able to change the makeup of this place that we call home because a lot of Latinos we identify, yes, we identify with our culture, like me being Puerto Rican, but I also identify as being from Mississippi and I am southern and like 100 percent. And so having to balance that and like not be afraid to say like I am 100 percent Puerto Rican, but I'm also 100 percent mississippian and southern and being proud of that. Um, I know a lot of Latinos that I talked to are thinking the same thing. And so just getting people on board with that idea that you don't have to be just one thing. He can be tons of different things. Yeah.