

Ingrid Valbuena transcript

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Okay, go ahead and get started. I'll be looking at the questions here. Um, so today is November sixth and we are currently in the library conducting interview for my thesis research titled The Latino South Race and Racialization. Um, are you 18 years or older? And can you stay in spelling your first and last name for the record?
- Speaker 2: [00:22](#) Okay, my name is Ingrid Valbuena. I was born September 29th, 1996. Okay.
- Speaker 1: [00:36](#) And where are you from and where did you grow up?
- Speaker 2: [00:39](#) So I am from and grew up in Venezuela.
- Speaker 1: [00:44](#) And um, what other places have you lived in?
- Speaker 2: [00:46](#) So I lived in Chicago all of my life until I graduated high school. I've lived in Oxford, Mississippi ever since.
- Speaker 1: [00:54](#) And um, what brought you from Venezuela to here?
- Speaker 2: [00:58](#) So I graduated high school in my parents and I always talked about the opportunity of studying, doing college abroad. Um, so I applied for Ole Miss, I want an interest in the IMC program in that I just knew my senior year that I was going to study at Ole miss
- Speaker 1: [01:16](#) How did you hear about Ole miss all the way in Venezuela?
- Speaker 2: [01:21](#) So I had an advisor connect it to the extracurricular English classes that I was taking a and her job was advising students to study abroad, um, and she knew I was wanting to study integrative marketing communications and at the time Ole miss was the only university that offered that program as an undergraduate program and it also had a scholarship for internationals, so applied to other schools. But this was a program that I was most interested in and even though I had never been to Oxford or Mississippi, that's how I got into it.
- Speaker 1: [01:57](#) Awesome. And is race an important part of your identity? Why or why not?

- Speaker 2: [02:03](#) Um, I guess it wasn't really important when I was in Venezuela because everyone there is kind of like the same. Like, I don't know, it's just not defined when you're growing up and you're either like lighter skin or darker skin, but either way we're all kind of a mix between native, you know, natives, slaves in European, like the people that came. So like, you know, there are some of my friends that were, you know, they were Italian because after World War Two, their grandparents moved here, so they were like Venezuelan, Italian or they were finished Spaniard. Like their closeness to that other side of the world was much more like it was closer, closer I guess. Then like I guess mine would be because I just know my grandparents and great grandparents is like Venezuelans. But then when I came to ole miss, I guess I don't, I don't wanna say it's like from day one, but it was always a conversation.
- Speaker 2: [03:03](#) There's always this conversation of race. I never thought about race until I was coming to Mississippi and my friends were like, oh, people are racist there. And I was like, oh no, no. And so then I got here and like through classes, through friendships, through involvement, I feel like it's become a really big conversation that I am a part of because I am a human being here and race is a big deal. But also like, you know, made me wonder, it should have and shouldn't have been a big deal where I'm from too. Or is it just different? I don't know,
- Speaker 1: [03:36](#) you know. And um, how did that impact you? Like coming from a country where there was really no, I guess the large distinction in rates versus coming to the United States and especially in the south and then even more so here in Mississippi where race is very important.
- Speaker 2: [03:57](#) I guess the first thing that made me think is like where do I fit in. And you know, and that's, you know, up until maybe two years ago, the phrase people of color was never like something I had heard or used. Um, but now I guess it's like it is like, it is part of who I am, what it is, something that I like. I feel like that's where I fall under. But it also made me realize that just because race wasn't a big deal or it wasn't a constant conversation where I'm from doesn't mean they shouldn't have been because just because I'm not white doesn't mean I can't be racist or my peers, my family, the people that look like me can't be racist. So I think it's, it has, it has affected how I think it's made me more

understanding and definitely made me understand things that I had, could have gone my whole life back home without even considering. So in that aspect I feel like it's been pretty positive not only on me but in my family and my friends because I'm like so much more aware of the differences, how they're good and how their bat and how to be more respectful.

Speaker 1: [05:01](#) Okay. And um, how has your experience being in university and living in Oxford?

Speaker 2: [05:08](#) It's been great. Like I love, I love the university. I had a really great, like, overall experience. I mean, I'm still here, I'm a Grad student now, but I feel like my favorite part of it is that these conversations about race inclusion, diversity, detention, how do we fix it? It's so constant that I instead of, instead of pushing me away, kind of pulled me in and it made me understand these topics. Uh, and I also think that I was very lucky that I ran into the people that I ran into at the time that I ran into because I've had a great experience. I've been involved in, you know, almost everything that I've wanted and like I feel like I am much more ingrid now that I was four years ago and will be more ingrid in two years. Like it is, has been a really great place. I think that I've been really lucky. Another, that's not everyone's experience, but that has been my hope that it's, it is more and more people have that experience like that because I feel like I have both learned a lot and gone through a lot. But I've also really thoroughly enjoyed it and like have had really good stuff happened to me.

Speaker 1: [06:17](#) And what is your major classification and some notable involvement that you have on campus?

Speaker 2: [06:24](#) So I'm doing a masters of Science and integrated marketing communication, so in and I graduated with a bachelor's in the same thing. Um, and while I was here I was an orientation leader. I did rebel radio, had shows. There was a marketing director, I was in the column society. I, um, yeah, I was, I was in a Sorority, I was in, I was vice president of Alpha Macron Pie. Um, but yeah, I think those are pretty good. Very stuff.

Speaker 1: [06:55](#) Okay. Uh, what are the most important aspects of your life right now and why?

- Speaker 2: [07:01](#) Right now I guess is family, friends and education. Like I have only gotten in closer for my family the older I get, which I'm, I love it. Like it's, I don't know what's making me thing this way now. And it's not that I didn't think of before. It was just more permanent now. You good?
Recording. Okay, cool. And
- Speaker 1: [07:24](#) you were talking about the most important aspects of your life, right where you left off?
- Speaker 2: [07:29](#) Yeah. Yeah. Let me start again because I remember I said, you know, whatever I said family, friends in education, a family because I feel like the older I've gotten, the more, the closer I am to my family. I've always been really close, but, you know, being away grows heart, you know, that this cheesy phrases of just like I love my family and I hate that I have them so far away. But I love that it's made me appreciate them a lot more friends because after four years here, my friends here are family and like just continue growing those relationships. I'm lucky that so many of them are still here. I'm lucky that so many of them get to come visit. So that's always just kind of like what makes life worth living and then education because that's what I'm here for and it's just kind of like, I feel like these two years that I have left for me to buckle down, get serious about what I really want to do with my life and like, you know, in a work aspect. So, um, you know, no more involvement in mind. No more like kind of things within the school that I wanted to achieve, I want to achieve outside of the school, so I feel like those are the most important aspects to me right now.
- Speaker 1: [08:39](#) And so the US Census Bureau, now we're going to get some more questions about race and identity of the US Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity as two different concepts. What is your ethnicity?
- Speaker 2: [08:54](#) I think of my ethnicity as Venezuelan, Latin, Hispanic, but it's only because I was born in Venezuela, Latin because Venezuela is in Latin America. And then Hispanic because I come from a culture. Let's speak Spanish. Nothing beyond. That's the three.
- Speaker 1: [09:12](#) And uh, what is your parent's nationality and do you identify with your nationality?

- Speaker 2: [09:16](#) Yes, my parent's nationality of both penicillin. My parents like, uh, both my parents were born in Venezuela. I was born in Venezuela. So yes, even though I don't live there anymore, being Dennis Olan as something that's never done that.
- Speaker 1: [09:31](#) And do you have a family? Your parents still live in Venezuela? Are they, do they live in the United States?
- Speaker 2: [09:36](#) They live in Miami. They moved during my junior year of college. Uh, yeah, my mom, my dad and my sister all moved.
- Speaker 1: [09:45](#) Okay. And um, how do you identify racially and why do you identify this way
- Speaker 2: [09:51](#) racially? I think it would go back to just being Latin and Hispanic. Um, I think a long time ago I looked up the definition of these and oneness geographically based and the other one is language base. Um, so I don't know if like you can't use them interchangeably because you can be Hispanic and not be Latin and you can be loud and not be Hispanic because you can be from Barcelona and be Latin, speak Portuguese and you can be from Spain. Susannah should not be a lot. And so I guess whenever people ask me what my race is, I answer Latin and Hispanic.
- Speaker 1: [10:24](#) And um, do you identify as Hispanic or Latina? Do you prefer either term?
- Speaker 2: [10:29](#) Identify as both. I think Latin, it's just more because I, you know, even if I don't know, the majority of us speak Spanish and like, but the majority of us, our culture is similar and I don't know, I feel like that is heavier than just the language that I speak.
- Speaker 1: [10:46](#) And do you prefer the term Latin overlap? Dina, don't mind. And a study showed that the Latino population is growing in the US. How do you think this will affect the way race and race relations with you to this country?
- Speaker 2: [10:59](#) I think hopefully it would make it less polarized, but I know that in some extent it has nothing to do with that. I think it will make people realize that it's not only to. That it is kind of more of a spectrum that we're continuously going to mix in. That there are some important things that we all

should know in order to be more respectful, but that these things that make us different students separate us. I feel like that's a lot into one sentence, but I feel like it's a little bit of the gist of what I feel like this is going to bring.

- Speaker 1: [11:31](#) Right. And how do you maintain your Latino culture while being a student at Ole Miss?
- Speaker 2: [11:39](#) I continues to speak to my parents, but I think a big thing is food and just the way that I and my friends are super used to by now and it's like, you know, I am, I cannot say how to. You're not hug you because where I'm coming from, we kiss each other on a tick every time we see each other. Uh, you know, I feel like I am an awful cook. But the way that I cook, the way that I do almost everything in the kitchen is how I learned it from my family. So like that is just like, that's where you learned are from. How do you unlearn that? Like that's just how I do it. Um, and that thing just continuously. Like if people are around me and they see that my dad's calling me, they're not going to expect me to speak English.
- Speaker 2: [12:24](#) They're not going to expect me to, you know, there's never a line between like, oh, here I am doing my culture and here I am not doing my culture is everywhere and it's just a part of who I am and for some of my friends that has been something they've learned or they asked me like, oh, how was that? What was that about? Or something like that. But with time they just know they just learn about something new before. And what are some challenges you faced with the university as a Latina? I guess just like going straight on into, you know, realizing their race is such a big deal and like understanding it and like I'm really glad that I was never like, oh I want to ignore this and never do this and never learn about this because it's scary and overwhelming and it's not that I was like leader of the pack let me talk about these things.
- Speaker 2: [13:14](#) But it was always definitely curious and I was always lucky that like a lot of my friends didn't look like me. Not only in the fact that they were, you know, they were not Latin, but there were also other cultures that I was able to learn from above the culture of Mississippi and other culture in school and like all these things that they were nice enough to explain to me and talk to me about, like, it's actually my freshman year when I didn't know. So asking these

questions were my way of knowing. Um, but I think other than that, like it's just, you know, you're just not everywhere. Not everyone looks like you. Not everyone comes from the same culture as you. So it's hard to run it to the people that like you see in, you already know the things that you're like, Oh yes, my family.

Speaker 2: [13:59](#) That's that too. Or Yes, but I think throughout the years I found more and more of those people because number one, I think one of those people came here, but also they are here. They're not hidden. They're just like doing their own thing. So like, unless you go and do their own thing, you know, you don't sound like they're like, hi me, be friendly. That's not how it works. You just have to find common connections and then be like, Oh yes, let's do that. Or like even there's a guy in my grad cohort that's in California and he's like a third generation Mexican American and first day of Class I was a first version he talked to and he was like, Oh, you know, we started speaking Spanish. We Dr our families and like, you know, it's just simple, it's easy. Comes in like. And then once you have that, like first connection, it makes making other connections so much easier. And um, has anyone

Speaker 1: [14:52](#) ever asked you about your race, your ethnicity and how do you typically respond to those questions?

Speaker 2: [14:58](#) A lot of people ask me where I'm from because they know I'm not from here. Um, and I just answer, um, I guess after for like, you know, the longer you're here, the more you get asked that question and then we're like, ah, there, there's more to me than where I'm from. Um, and sometimes it's just people that are your friends that are you just getting to know them. So I feel like it's a case by case basis. I will always say where I'm from, I will always answer questions. Not a disrespectful person, but I definitely have learned to stand my ground where I feel like where they're going. It's not something that I'm comfortable with talking about, but it doesn't happen very often.

Speaker 1: [15:39](#) And you said people can tell that you're not from here. How would you say people can tell that?

Speaker 2: [15:45](#) Because I'm not white and like, you know, I have my skin is like the color that it is and like my eyes are dark and my eyebrows are thick and like in my hair is like mainly a hot

mess. So that's my responsibility. But like, you know it's dark and like, you know, if you see me on the phone with my parents, I'm not going to be speaking English. So like I feel like people can look at me and maybe they won't know I'm Venezuelan, but they will know I'm Hispanic and Latin and that's fine.

Speaker 1: [16:15](#) Have you ever experienced any assumptions about your character because of your identity?

Speaker 2: [16:20](#) Yes. I feel like a lot of people think that I'm Mexican and that's a common, I feel like that's common for a lot of Hispanics and a lot of Latinos, like you just, that's just what they know, what people know the most. Um, so I've had people just kind of assume that I'm going to correct them and that's fine. Like, um, and then not very often, but a lot of my fame and my friends' families may ask me about immigration status and stuff like that. And I generally just answer honestly, I don't have like, I guess my situation is not as, I don't wanna say dramatic, but I'm saying like I'm complicated or hard to explain and like, but I feel like I wouldn't like to be asked that question if I didn't want to answer it. So sometimes I'm just kinda like, is it really your business? You know? But yeah, I think that's, that's it.

Speaker 1: [17:22](#) What do you think gives people, I guess like the place or the authority and really asked you like what your immigration status is because you can ask anybody what their citizenship status is regardless of what they look like. So what do you, what do you think it is really causing that are causing adults or your friends' parents? I guess like Middle Age folks to ask you that?

Speaker 2: [17:46](#) I think it's definitely the versus the minority in the sense of like they belong here. You don't belong here even though that doesn't stand any ground. Um, and I think definitely the political climate, like I mean it's a constant conversation in the news, positive or negative. So people that maybe thought about it but wouldn't ask now feel like they can ask because it's an issue right now and they may have develop opinions about it based on news coverage and stuff like that. So I feel like that is why people feel like, number one they can ask and number two they should ask and like all this kind of things.

Speaker 1: [18:31](#) Um, and do you speak Spanish? If yes, how did you learn?

- Speaker 2: [18:35](#) Um, yes, my native language is Spanish, so since I grew up in Minnesota, that was my first language and then while I was growing up, I learned English as a second language.
- Speaker 1: [18:43](#) Um, and how important is the ability to speak Spanish to the Latino culture?
- Speaker 2: [18:49](#) I feel like it's super important, um, but I feel like it's not what makes you Latin. I am, I speak Spanish because I grew up in a Spanish speaking country, so it'd be really weird if I didn't because that's how we do things, you know? Um, but I think a lot of it is, is maybe not the language as a whole, but the things that come with the language, um, that are very, very important. So like the closeness to your family, uh, the food, the music, all those things are just as important as language to me.
- Speaker 1: [19:25](#) And how does the university and the community cater to the Latino population?
- Speaker 2: [19:29](#) They do so little that I. Oh, I don't even know, you know, like I remember my freshman year, I made my first friends through laso. Uh, and that was really hard for, to find people. Like none of them were men as well, but a lot of Ecuadorians, a lot of Colombians, so it was really nice to just be around that group of people. But I don't know if that's been the case for new latins coming in. Um, so it, because I know it's an organization that depends on the amount of Latin Americans and Hispanics at the school house and if that number doesn't grow, how can you expect Lasa to grow? Um, but in terms of the community, I don't think I've ever noticed anything that's specifically catered to Hispanics and Latins at all
- Speaker 1: [20:23](#) and kind of following up. How does the university and the community or the Latino population,
- Speaker 2: [20:31](#) I guess by not like, like by not seeing it represented anywhere is hard for you to like picture yourself there or like feel like you can do certain things that other people may feel like they can do it and only because they have the confidence but because they see people like them on those kind of places.
- Speaker 1: [20:53](#) And um, how you view race in the US in the south and in Oxford

Speaker 2: [21:00](#) I guess in the world is just race is just what you were born into a in, you know, it can be a big part of your identity. I think it just depends on a case by case basis, how you grew your life. I think in America is something that is very important and that it's people shouldn't ignore, it should be talked about. Talking about is good. Talking about things. It's got being open minded and trying to understand things is even better. You should do it about not only race but everything. Be Open minded and learn and like don't expect people to have to explain everything to you. Go and look for that information. And I think in Oxford is like, it's incredible. There's like Mississippi small town, you know, all the reputation that comes with that. But it is a place where this conversation is alive and I feel like the more things happen, the more like momentum it gets. And I was like I don't want that to die. I don't want that to knock into any happening because there's, I've seen so much change in my four years here and I want you to see more in the two years that I've left here and the future that I come back and I just want to continue seeing change and I think that, you know, don't sleep on Oxford, Mississippi. I feel like real changes happening and I feel like that's good.

Speaker 1: [22:25](#) How do you perceive the Latino population? A thickening of the idea of race here in the south?

Speaker 2: [22:32](#) I guess like the Latino population is growing a lot in the south, like maybe because we think of Latino population with think like big cities like New York or we think of California, we think of the border, but like there is such a big Hispanic and growing population in the south that I think, you know, I think it's gonna. I don't think it's going to complicate things in a bad way. I think it's going to complicate things in the sense of like people are gonna realize how similar southern hospitality culture in Latino culture are and I think it's going to complicate things in the sense of like, people aren't going to get along, you just have to open your mind and not have this like window that you see the world through that pain salespeople, people as bad because that's not what it is. Um, so I don't know.

Speaker 2: [23:20](#) I feel like in my really, you know, in the, in the aspect that I want to be very optimistic. I want them, I want these two groups of people to find that common ground because that was a big part of how I found almost to be comforting because people were really, really nice and people were

like, you know, come to my house eating my food. Like this hospitality thing. It's like seeing my, my family is like that. And on my family's like, you need anything come, like, eat my food. You can say my place. Like it's, it's very welcoming and like kind of like expects nothing in return. Um, and I would hope for that to be a good thing. And um, is there anything else or any other topics or points that you'd like to discuss that I didn't ask you? Oh, thanks. I hope I explained myself well enough that you listened to this and you're like, oh yeah, that's what she was referring to because I can be like, just too many words. So little time. You know, what does the new meme, it's like I have two brain cells. Me Today.