

Jade Orellana transcript

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) I am now recording. Okay. So today is November 28th. I am interviewing Jade Orellana for my thesis research titled The Latino South: Race and Racialization. So jump right in. Are you 18 years or older? And can you state and spell your first and last name for the record?
- Speaker 2: [00:21](#) My first name is Karyssa Orellana but I go by Jade.
- Speaker 1: And when were you born?
- Speaker 2: Um, I was born March 29th. A 1997. I'm an aries.
- Speaker 1: [00:40](#) and where are you from and where did you grow up?
- Speaker 2: [00:44](#) Well, I am from, I was born and say there for kind of a pretty, a big part of my childhood that um, you know, the developing years. Um, I was born in Escondido, California, which was right outside of San Diego and I lived there for about four years. So I mean I kind of grew up, you know, speaking that way, um, being around a lot of diversity and a lot of difference. And then, um, when I was, I think it was right after my fifth birthday or something, um, we moved to Forest, Mississippi, which is kind of in the middle of nowhere so we could be closer to our family. Um, and I spent a few years there and then the rest of the time, um, I think two years later we moved to Brandon, Mississippi. And then I've lived there for, um, until now when I moved to Oxford for college.
- Speaker 1: [01:34](#) So what brought your family like from Forest to Brandon?
- Speaker 2: [01:41](#) Well, um, the reason that we even moved to Mississippi in the first place is because, um, my dad's family is and also El Salvador, so I wasn't really going to have a chance to be that close to him anyways because at that point I was an only child. And so my mom was like, well, I mean I want her to be a part of my family as well because all of them live in Mississippi at the coast. Um, so she was like, well, I want to be close enough. So we moved to forest and um, my dad had a job lined up with someone from my mom's side of the family's a business that they owned. Um, and then from forest, um, we moved to Brighton because my dad had another job, prospects lined up, so it was more of

job stuff, but we tried to stay the Mississippi area to be closer to family. So.

- Speaker 1: [02:24](#) And what brought you from Brandon to Oxford?
- Speaker 2: [02:27](#) Well, um, majority of people from my high school kind of chose to do like community college or um, you know, other universities. But um, I'm a first gen college student so I didn't really have that much bringing me in big set for me to go to a four year. Um, my parents really pushed for me to go to a two year college. But, um, I really didn't want that. I wanted a change of scenery. I wanted something different. So I just kind of decided that it was time for me to push myself to something better. Not that no tear isn't a bad thing or anything, but I wanted something bigger and better for myself. So I pushed myself to come here
- Speaker 1: [03:08](#) and um, so is race an important part of your identity. Why or why not?
- Speaker 2: [03:15](#) Well, for me it definitely is, um, because for the majority of my life, um, you know, my dad was always working and he's the, he's a Hispanic one, um, and my mom's white with red hair and all that. So she definitely very white. Um, she was the one that always came to my school stuff like any place or little parties or whatever. Um, and so every time people saw, you know, my mom, they just kind of assumed that I was white and it throughout my life, especially in, um, in Mississippi with a lack of, you know, Hispanic population, there was some. But most of the schools I went to didn't really have Hispanic people, especially in brandon. Um, when I told people that I was Hispanic, no one believed me. And that was something that I didn't really think, you know, I didn't really think that much about.
- Speaker 2: [04:06](#) And I kind of started identifying as white. Not that I didn't believe it, but that I was Hispanic, but I kind of thought that because I didn't look Hispanic, I wasn't. And um, so, you know, coming into college and everything, I realized that I can have multiple identities kind of exists with each other and I don't have to identify one way or the other because definitely people told me that I wasn't Hispanic or that they didn't believe me until they saw my dad. Then even then they were like, well, you're still white, you know, so it was kind of invalidating. So I still, you know, with race, I definitely make that a huge part of my life because that's

still my culture even though I was raised white and in America. And that wasn't like I wasn't surrounded by Hispanic culture all the time. So.

Speaker 1: [04:52](#) And um, how has your experience been at ole miss and living in Oxford?

Speaker 2: [04:58](#) Well, for me, um, I think it also, I think for me like whiteness has kind of like a subconscious thing. Like whenever I came here, I saw kind of how like white people, you know, they went to Sororities, they went to parties and this and that. And I kind of thought that in order to be accepted here I kind of had to fit into that. Um, so my first year, even though like I was the most sociable, I made the most friends, like I didn't keep many of those friends and I didn't keep many of those memories as well as I did later on in life. Like later on in college when I branched past that and got involved with other organizations. But, um, yeah, I definitely pushed my. I tried to push myself into a box that everybody else fit into even though I identified separately and I didn't see people like me. I saw people from the same types of backgrounds, the same beliefs, same system that, um, and I didn't really agree with that and I didn't realize how miserable I was until after I left. And, you know, even though I still do enjoy, you know, being in a sorority and all that, I just realized that it was kind of toxic for me because I was trying to be something that I wasn't and you know, keeping my race in mind, like I didn't think that that side of me could flourish in that.

Speaker 1: [06:13](#) So what is your major classification in some notable involvement?

Speaker 2: [06:19](#) Um, okay. So I'm in integrated marketing communications major. I'm, I have a minor in general business and gender studies, which is a huge reason that, um, I kind of, you know, identify as a feminist and stuff more in depth. What was the other part of that question?

Speaker 1: [06:37](#) Major classification in any notable way.

Speaker 2: [06:40](#) Oh, okay. So I helped found a feminist, which is feminist empowerment at the University of Mississippi and I'm currently the president now. So, um, it's been here for four years. Um, I'm also a part of A. I'm an ambassador for the school of Journalism. I'm mean, I wish I had my resume

with me because I have a lot of stuff that I'm in. Um, a few of the most important thing, most important, I was a senator, um, for the associated student body. I was a part of this, the inclusion and cross cultural engagement committee. Um, I've also kind of here and there, but involved with, um, US Democrats. Um. Oh Gosh, I'm already forgetting rebels against sexual assault. Okay. I'm forgetting most of them, but pretty much that pretty much the political groups that are more left leaning on campus I've probably been involved with at some point. So.

Speaker 1: [07:43](#) And so now more questions about your identity. And so the US Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity ethnicity as two different concepts. What is your ethnicity?

Speaker 2: [07:54](#) Um, my ethnicity, I guess I would say I guess I would have to identify as white because my skin is white and I do appear white. Um, yeah, I guess that's the simplest answer.

Speaker 1: [08:09](#) And um, what is your nationality do you identify with your nationality?

Speaker 2: [08:15](#) Um, so I am, even though I'm am American, I do identify as Salvadoran, um, at least half Salvadorian. I'm because I have visited the country and I do know some parts of, you know, I knew a know a lot about the culture, the background, um, you know, I've kind of lived it for a little while and um, you know, I'm close to my family members, so I only say that, you know, it's a part of it and insists considering, you know, I, I'm close with my dad. I do consider that even though he can't, you know, teach me the entire culture. I do identify with that.

Speaker 1: [08:52](#) And how do you identify racially? Do you identify

Speaker 2: [08:56](#) this way? Um, I definitely identify as Biracial, uh, because I think that, like I've said before, that it's super important to not put people into those kind of boxes. Um, because I know a huge thing I struggled with, which really isn't a huge. I know that a lot of people don't really struggle with it is um, you know, whenever you have to fill out like forms about your race and stuff. I know for me they would usually, like on computers and stuff, they would only allow you to click one. And for me, I was always like, okay, what do I pick Hispanic too, I pick white, which wasn't, doesn't really seem like a huge thing, but like it was kind of a lot of

internal conflict. So I'm glad that they've added like Biracial, multiracial, um, to those [inaudible] identify with that now. So, and do you identify as Hispanic or Latina and you have a preference of term lie?

Speaker 2: [09:48](#)

Um, I don't really know honestly. I guess anything that kind of gives me like the notoriety, um, because I know Central America is kind of like a weird in between little category anyways. So, and because I'm, you know, American, um, I dunno, I kinda just say I'm Hispanic or Latina, I just kind of say it even though I know that there's definitely a difference, but I just catch myself saying that about myself sometimes. So. And so studies show that the Latino population is growing in the US. How do you think this will affect the way race or race relations in this country? Um, I definitely think that there will be more Latina Latino representation in the media, in Congress, in local politics. Because, you know, if you look at the statistics of, you know, how many Hispanic people in there are like in the state around, um, I mean even if you look at, um, you know, labels and stuff that had Spanish underneath it because it's like a huge language now.

Speaker 2: [10:53](#)

I'm, a lot of people here are bilingual for that reason because it's like a huge, it's a huge part of our culture now. People don't want to, you know, necessarily believe that. But it is and I think that in the future I think that more people will be pushed to learn Spanish because it is very useful. Um, and that, you know, Hispanic people will be pushed to represent their people. And what are some challenges you face at the university as a Latino student? I guess I'm not enough representation because I know that history months on campus, I know that, I know that you've pushed for, you know, getting that organized. But I guess because of the small percentage, they think that, you know, the ones here aren't as concerned with us being represented in any form. But I think that that's completely not the case because there are a lot of Hispanic people, um, if you, if you just look solely at the numbers, then obviously you're going to think there's not a lot here, but there are more and there are a lot of the people that are here want to represent themselves more on campus.

Speaker 2: [12:02](#)

And how do you maintain your being a student here? For me it's more of um, I guess social. So social media is like a huge part of being in college and I'm kind of like

establishing yourself. I definitely make sure to follow like Hispanic and Latina activists, um, journalists that kind of report on central and South America just so I can kind of keep in the know. Um, and I definitely eat a lot of Hispanic food. So. And has anyone ever asked you about your race or ethnicity and how do you typically respond to these types of which I'm usually, people don't ask me when they see me, but when they read my name, specifically my last name, that's when they asked me. Um, wait, what was the rest of that? Sorry. How do you typically respond to these questions? Like what is your race? What are you?

Speaker 2:

[12:59](#)

Oh, well, usually when people. I'm kind of notice because of my last name, that's when I kind of get excited and I'm like, okay, well I'll tell you about me because I love to talk about my dad's background, my background, like the love story of my parents and all of that. I think that it's, I think it's like once people you know, asked me, um, they're usually a lot more interested in their life. They want to know more once I tell them. So. And what is your parents? Well, my mom is from Pascagoula, Mississippi and my dad is from El Salvador and my dad had to leave El Salvador because I'm in the eighties. There was a war there and he was old enough to be drafted so he had to um, what the caravan is doing now. He kind of did that. Um, he kind of did that.

Speaker 2:

[13:50](#)

Um, I guess migration to Mexico for a few years. I can't remember if he moved from Mexico to California with immediately or if he moved back to El Salvador and then went to the United States. But he, um, he did. He did migrate illegally, but he went to, uh, to California. He learned English, all of that. Got a job, all that, um, and my mom just on a whim because my grandparents had moved out there just for a little while because they had property out there, uh, before it got super expensive. Um, she wanted a change of scenery. So she moved out there and my mom was working at a pet boys and she was a cashier and my dad came in to get, I don't know, some cars, some either, something for his car or whatever. And they asked my mom for a number and then as soon as that was, you know, the rest was history. So I think it's really crazy because if my mom wouldn't have made that decision to move out there, my dad, you know, had been drafted or if he stayed in El Salvador, I wouldn't be here. So. And um,

- Speaker 1: [14:52](#) how has that realization been or journey band with your father knowing that he immigrated to the United States and wasn't originally documented? Or was that something that you've ever had to talk about with people or with your family, especially considering the current state of how immigrants are?
- Speaker 2: [15:12](#) Well, there's definitely, um, growing up in Mississippi and having a dad who is brown and who is bilingual but has a thick accent who looks Hispanic, who, you know, his name is Jose. I'm, he's all the things that, you know, people, you know are racist against. So, um, my mom has stood up for him, which is good, but we do have a lot of republicans that identify, like, identify people that identify with, you know, Republican in my family and associated around my family. And I think that it's definitely caused kind of an issue because he can't vote. He only has permanent residency so we can't vote. But I know that he wants to vote a certain way because that's in the best interest of him. So I think we've had to talk about it before. I've had, I helped him a study for citizenship test before, but again, whenever you're someone who didn't go to college and you're an immigrant, you don't have citizenship, um, it's hard to study for that citizenship and also maintain a full time job and support a family. So I think he'll get it eventually. But for now, um, I've had to help him study for it and you know, I've had to realize how difficult that process is and how, you know, oppressive. It kind of is. Um, yeah, I think that's pretty much all I have to say about that question
- Speaker 1: [16:36](#) with your father being a permanent resident, a citizen, his deportation, deportation, something that your family worry about. Well, I, I,
- Speaker 2: [16:48](#) I know that definitely worried about it because I definitely think that, um, with the kind of, the way that ice officials act and how they just completely disregard the actual law. Um, I definitely am scared that sometimes my dad will be targeted even though he shouldn't be affected by that. I still think that they'll override the law and just, you know, send him back home even though he's been here for decades, just because he is Brown and he speaks Spanish and he's had tons of friends being sent home, deported. Um, so I definitely am scared because there have been a lot of raids. Uh, there was one point where there was a, there are rates close to my home and um, tons of millions of people that

my dad knew talk to all the time. Um, you know, they were ripped away from their families and so I'm always scared that that's going happen. Um, even though, you know, he says that he's not going to. And my mom and other people were like, no, he's fine. Like he's not going to. I just definitely have like a deep feeling in my gut that they're going to completely override the law and just, you know, send them back home.

Speaker 1: [17:52](#) And what about being in spaces with your mom or being maybe the biggest basis with both your father and your father and your mother, your father? You said multiple times it's Brown. And speaking of that, you said your mom, like white woman with red hair, how was that situation or like play out if you're in public with both of your parents or maybe if you're with your mother or your father and like you said you needed to take after either one too strongly. You have fair skin, dark hair. Not right here. And I really brown skin and kind of like in the middle. So that been,

Speaker 2: [18:23](#) um, I definitely think that whenever we're all together, I think now it's changed. Whenever I was younger I kind of didn't really pay attention to that, but I've definitely, you know, my mom has had to stand up for my dad sometimes. I know that whenever he first came to Mississippi he did face some racism from a lot of people. Sorry. Um, but, so it's, it's good that she has a sharp tongue and that she's willing to stand up for him and that, um, once, you know, I was born and, you know, my siblings were born and they saw how long my dad was in it for the long run with my mom. Um, that, you know, the rest of our family kind of sticks up for him and stuff. So I'm sorry, I forgot the question again.

Speaker 1: [19:12](#) Oh yeah. Being in Mississippi and coming from a biracial family.

Speaker 2: [19:17](#) Well definitely whenever I'm with my, just with my mom, I feel like I do get a little bit more respect. Everybody's like, Oh, you look just like her and they're so sweet and all this and that. And I felt like sometimes when I'm with my dad there's some people who either talked about data a little slow because, you know, it takes them, sometimes it takes them a little while to like translate things. And I totally understand that because he's got, you know, both of those languages in his head. Um, or, you know, I think I've, I

think I've seen, you know, I've heard people talk about him, you know, heard stories of people talking about him or talking to him certain ways. I'm not necessarily when I've been with him, but um, I know that he's been pulled over by police for no reason before, so thankfully I wasn't there because I would've said something myself. But um, but yeah, definitely I can see the mistreatment on one side even though my dad has definitely, um, he hasn't done anything wrong. He hasn't broken any laws or anything. So

Speaker 1: [20:15](#) do you speak Spanish? White? Sorry? Have you ever experienced any assumptions about your character? Has anyone ever stereotyped you or anything like that because of your perceived race? Well,

Speaker 2: [20:26](#) definitely, uh, I guess not because I'm white passing, so I think that some people think they're, you know, they can comfortably say stuff around me because I've had tons of, where white people are comfortable around me and they say certain things and they don't realize like the background that I come from. Um, but then once they realized that they kind of keep their mouth shut. Um, but yeah, I definitely have. I guess people assume that they can say things around me because I'm whining that I'd agree with the majority opinion of why people. But that's not the case. What are some things that people have said around you? People have, there's definitely a lot of people who, uh, that I've just met who just kind of openly talked about, you know, being republican or supporting Republican values or that I should, um, but then they don't realize the extent of how certain things have affected my family.

Speaker 2: [21:18](#) Um, and how that kind of opinion kind of affects my dad and a not so positive way. So yeah, definitely people have, they feel like they're comfortable enough to say either like racist comments or, you know. Yeah, definitely racist comments around me. I'm just little subtle things here and there. I'm just about people that have passed by or whatever, but obviously they don't know my background until I tell them, but people who know me well, they'll never say stuff like that around me. And do you speak Spanish? If yes, how did you learn? Why not? Well, whenever I was younger, um, and I lived in California, um, there was definitely, there's a rich Hispanic population there, um, especially where we lived and stuff. I know that I remember in the apartment complex that we lived, there

was a biracial, it was a black and white family above me, um, and there were a lot of Hispanic people that lived around, so I know that I definitely grew up with people like different people have different backgrounds and stuff, so, um, I know that I went to daycare when I was younger and my mom tried to teach me a little bit of his, like of Spanish here and there, so I knew like a lot of the basics I probably knew kind of like intro level Spanish stuff, not sentences, but I could speak a lot of phrases I knew like parts of my body colors, all this basic stuff that three, four year old should know.

Speaker 2: [22:42](#) Um, but then after that we moved to Mississippi and my dad worked full time, so I kind of lost all that. So now I, I don't speak Spanish and it's kind of hard for me to pick it up, but I'm very motivated to learn. Would you say the main reason why you weren't taught Spanish as it was because your father was working? Yes, my mom was a stay at home mom for the majority of my life whenever I was younger and I was an only child. She worked at the daycare that I had care at and I was there from like an infant to like, by the time we've left California, moved to Mississippi. So yeah. Um, she obviously she doesn't speak Spanish so she couldn't really teach me, but she tried as hard as she could to teach me some, but once you know, I was, I didn't keep on that and I just went to a public school. I couldn't, I didn't learn, I didn't keep that knowledge and I kind of lost it, but it required to work so many hours. Um, so he, I know that he works mostly like I guess I guess the term would be like vocational jobs, like hands on jobs. Like I know that he operated his current job, he operates cranes and stuff. Um, so I think it's stuff like that. It's not, it's stuff that comes with training but not with necessarily like an educational background.

Speaker 1: [24:04](#) And how do you feel? Um, I guess having the opportunity to learn Spanish, you know, because your father was working.

Speaker 2: [24:12](#) Yeah, I think it definitely sucks because now I know that it would be so useful and it's so much harder now because when I was a kid I soaked up everything. Um, and so it was so much easier for me to learn then. But now, you know, I don't have the time. I'm scared that it'll, you know, it'll affect my gpa, all that stuff. So, um, I think that I just kinda need to go back to that and learn on my own time where

I'm not stressed out about it. I think that definitely would help a lot, especially because now, you know, I've got to be applying for jobs soon. Um, it would definitely help to be able to speak Spanish, but I'm not holding it against myself because I have the rest of my life to learn. So.

Speaker 1: [24:51](#) And um, how important is the ability to speak Spanish to the Latino community?

Speaker 2: [24:55](#) Oh, it's definitely really critical. I know that whenever I went to, I went to El Salvador for a few weeks. I'm with my dad and I was alone. I was 10 years old and I did not speak any Spanish at all and it was so difficult to communicate to my family. Um, I kind of had to, they knew some English phrases I knew like some things, like we kind of had to write stuff down or I had to get my dad to translate. I'm also had um, my tio and he actually lived in Florida for like 12 years, but he went back to um, I can't remember why, but he went back to El Salvador and he spoke English so he helped me out but my cousins couldn't speak, but I want my, I had a, I have cousins my age, so when I was there I was 10 and I had a 13, 15 and 17 year old cousin. We were all girls and so I wanted to hang out with them, but it was so hard to communicate. So I think that that would have known Spanish would've made the experience a lot better. Cause even my takeaway, like I didn't know, I didn't learn Spanish. I there. So you can't learn it in two weeks, but I didn't really pick up that much. So yeah,

Speaker 1: [26:11](#) I'm going to combine question 22 and 23. Um, but how has the university and community cater to and only made it to the Latino population?

Speaker 2: [26:22](#) Um, I definitely think that I'm Spanish. I think that with the amount of Spanish classes and with them kind of pushing Spanish is like a general, like language to take. I think that that's kind of like a little bit of representation because I know most people think that Spanish is like easy or whatever and that's what they take instead of German or Chinese or Japanese. Um, but I still think that we're not represented in like the amount of like history classes we have on campus. Like there's not, um, if you look at the amount of like American history classes, which I know we're in America, but I know what I was looking through courses. Um, there was like only one for Latin American history and I guess also with, you know, gender studies

classes there. I haven't seen one that's specifically around like, you know, Latin American or you know, like Latin American women's movements or something like that.

Speaker 2:

[27:15](#)

Um, so yeah, I definitely think that representation in classes like is there but not there in terms of like history and stuff. And how do you view race in the US in the south and here in Oxford? I definitely think I'm in the US. There are definitely like definitely the marginalized communities that have been marginalized are still marginalized and nothing's really changed with that. People want to act like this because there is an existing slavery or exclusion acts that everybody's equal. But that's not the case at all. Um, I think definitely like in the south having darker skin affects the way that you're treated by police treated by the law treated by um, you know, jobs pretty by everything and people act like that to not still prevalent, but it is. Um, and definitely an Oxford. I think that there's a little bit more tolerance, but there's definitely not, um, on campus, just because, you know, people of color have positions on campus or are more popular or whatever doesn't mean that, that the surrounding families of color have been treated well because I know specifically there is a huge issue with um, low income housing around this area and how, um, they're not, they're definitely not treated well and that they're not catered to still just because they have those low income housing doesn't mean that they're actually being helped at all.

Speaker 2:

[28:47](#)

So how do you perceive the and Latino population affecting the idea of race here in the south? I definitely think that with the amount of Hispanic people just making things work. I'm taking the jobs that people say that they want, but they don't really want. Um, I think that there's a rich kind of culture down here. People don't realize that, like the reason that we have these Mexican restaurants, the reason that we have like, you know, other restaurants working well, the reason that we have, you know, our farms working well is because we have Hispanic people with such a big presence that are willing to take, you know, less than livable wages to keep everything working because like we've seen in California and stuff with all of the raids that, those, there's been shortages that there then, you know, things have affected our economy, has affected our food and everything because Hispanic people have been deported. Um, so I definitely think that they, like, they're,

they keep everything moving and working like clockwork. And if we didn't have them, we wouldn't have things running smoothly.

Speaker 1: [29:58](#) And um, we already talked about challenges or points or topics or things that you'd like to talk about that I didn't ask you.

Speaker 2: [30:11](#) Um, I think, um, I don't really think I have anything else to say just besides, you know, I wish we had more representation and I understand that, you know, in majority white areas we're not going to get that. Especially whenever, you know, where even a smaller minority than black people as well. So yeah, I think that it'd be good if, you know, we banded with other marginalized communities, but I guess it's a lot harder to do that considering I don't know where I was going on. I had something I was going to say, but then like I heard the kids running around, so I kind of like blanked. Well, sorry.