

Julio Cazares transcript

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) We are now recording. Today is November 15 and we are conducting an interview in Bishop Hall and the interview is for my thesis research titled The Latino South Race and Racialization. So we'll go ahead and jump right in. Um, are you 18 years or older? And can you state and spell your first and last name for the record?
- Speaker 2: [00:20](#) Yep, that's Julio Cazares
- Speaker 1: [00:25](#) So, um, when were you born?
- Speaker 2: [00:46](#) I was born May 20, 1988.
- Speaker 1: And uh, where are you from and where did you grow up?
- Speaker 2: I'm from Holland, Michigan and I grew up in Holland, Michigan.
- Speaker 1: And have you ever lived in any other places? I
- Speaker 2: 've lived in Charlotte, North Carolina for Undergrad and then I studied abroad in Valencia, Spain for a little bit. So.
- Speaker 1: And uh, what kind of attracted you to Charlotte, North Carolina for Undergrad and then ultimately what drew you here to Mississippi?
- Speaker 2: So for Undergrad, uh, just kind of moving to a different state, different city, um, I knew that going to school in North Carolina would be a lot more affordable as well. Um, and also just there'd be more economic opportunity. I mean I could get a job in North Carolina really easy.
- Speaker 1: Ultimately, what led you here to the University of Mississippi Law School?
- Speaker 2: Pretty much just the law school itself. I mean I did a, I did a couple of visits to law schools during orientation weeks and stuff and mostly it's just my thought Oxford was beautiful. It actually reminded me a lot of my hometown, so.
- Speaker 1: [02:03](#) Okay. And how has that law school adjustment been here?

Speaker 2: [02:08](#) It was interesting at first I actually, a, I realized I was going through like a culture shock. Oh my first month or so here in Mississippi, but now it's much better. It's still interesting, but it's better.

Speaker 1: [02:23](#) And what were the demographics like in Holland? Like growing up, what type of community were you raised in?

Speaker 2: [02:31](#) I was definitely around a Hispanic people or all Latino people mostly. Um, some African Americans. Holland is very honestly, it's very much like Oxford. It's very white. So I was, I grew up in a very segregated neighborhood. Um, so that definitely was interesting.

Speaker 1: And what made Oxford, I guess kind of a shock to you, how is Oxford a culture shock?

Speaker 2: Um, well I knew that it was going to be culturally different. I just wasn't prepared for how culturally different it would be and how intense it would be. Um, and so, uh, it's like a whole nother degree of southern every day. Yeah.

Speaker 1: [03:21](#) And um, is race an important part of your identity? Why or why not?

Speaker 2: [03:26](#) Yeah, no, I definitely think it is race. I, I mean, I can't really, I don't want to and I can't really change who I am. It's the first thing people see about me. Um, it's another thing that I've really grown to love and accept and I didn't use to as a child. So now that I'm an adult and I do, um, and that it's become important to me.

Speaker 1: [03:51](#) Um, and as a child, what made it difficult for you to embrace your heritage and who you are and I guess kind of versus looking at where you are now as an adult?

Speaker 2: [04:01](#) Yeah, no, first was just growing up in Michigan growing up in Holland, Michigan. Um, and then the second was just how my parents raised me. They wanted me to definitely assimilate, um, definitely fit in as much as possible even though I mean that would, I guess I would never fit in 100 percent because I didn't look like everybody else. So, but yeah, so that, that definitely was it.

Speaker 1: [04:31](#) And how, how are you now with just being proud of who you are? How has that been?

- Speaker 2: [04:37](#) I definitely, I'm always very proud of who I am. I'm actually kind of see it as a mission. Um, I realized that I have an obligation to be a visible Latino presence for people like, I mean, like I feel privileged to be able bodied, you know, educated going to college and I feel like I need to be out in the public eye so that other people who are less privileged than me can be out in the public and have an easier life. So,
- Speaker 1: [05:18](#) How has your experience been at university and living here in Oxford?
- Speaker 2: [05:23](#) Yeah, no, my experience has been pretty interesting. Um, I mean it, I would say everybody has been accepting enough. Um, it's, it's always interesting when you see like, uh, like when people try to overcompensate by being so polite. That's always funny. Um, and I mean they elected me as senator, so that has to be something that was interesting. I mean obviously, I mean, I don't know, maybe lucky because I'm at the law school and there's a lot of out of state students, but I mean it's definitely been pretty interesting.
- Speaker 1: [06:04](#) Can you tell me what year you are in law school? What type of law you study and maybe some involvement that you have within the law school?
- Speaker 2: [06:21](#) Yeah. Um, so yeah, I'm a first year law student and I guess notable involvement. Um, well I'm a part of a LLSA which is the Latino, the Latino Law Students Association. I'm a part of BLSA, which is the black law student association, um, part of, part of outlaw which is the Lgbtq a law student association. I'm a member of the Student Bar Association and I'm a senator.
- Speaker 1: [06:54](#) What are you studying any type of law or do you know what type of law you ultimately want to practice or?
- Speaker 2: [07:02](#) So we're not learning any specific law just yet, but I do know I like any kind of international contract law. I like international business. I like anything to do with international stuff. So.
- Speaker 1: Cool. Yeah. And um, what are the most important aspects of your life right now and why?

Speaker 2: School? Definitely just school. I mean it's like what I've been working for the last, well two years of Undergrad. I decided last years ago that I wanted to do law school. So this is definitely like my main priority.

Speaker 1: And now into more questions about your identity and who you are. So the US Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity as two different concepts. What is your ethnicity?

Speaker 2: So my ethnicity, I would say and probably be Mexican, Mexican American. I mean I would see my race as being Mexican obviously to um, I just can't see. Mexican culture is so unique. It's kind of hard to separate my race, my ethnicity.

Speaker 1: So, and um, what are your parents' nationality and do you identify with their nationality?

Speaker 2: Both of my parents are Mexican and I definitely do. Yeah.

Speaker 1: And how do you identify racially and why do you identify this way?

Speaker 2: I identify as Mexican. I mean, I, I could say Mexican American or something, but I just, yeah, just Mexican is fine with me.

Speaker 1: And um, were your parents born in the United States or were they born in Mexico?

Speaker 2: My Dad was born in Mexico. My mom was born in Texas.

Speaker 1: I think about how that's an interesting, I guess to have one parent who was born in the States and one born in Mexico. Did that in a way and make your experience as a child or unique, um, as a child of Mexican Americans unique?

Speaker 2: [09:06](#) It had definitely, um, it was interesting because, um, I mean where we grew up in and it was still like a migrant family. Like the only reason my parents ended up where they did was because of migrant work. So, you know, it's uh, it was, I would still say very much a strictly first generation Mexican upbringing in America.

Speaker 1: [09:31](#) And uh, are you a first generation college student?

- Speaker 2: Yeah. And I guess taking that into account, going through Undergrad and now in law school.
- Speaker 1: Um, how has your experience been in relation to you being a first generation student?
- Speaker 2: [09:46](#) Um, it's, I've definitely had to take the advice of my peers a lot of because like for instance, um, you know, thanksgiving break is coming up, um, and I planned on going home for Thanksgiving break, but all of my classmates who have doctors and lawyers as parents kept on saying, oh, my parents are saying stay here and study. And I'm like, why? And apparently that's very common and it gives you an advantage because he literally have 10 days to study. Whereas for me, I never had parents in college so I wouldn't never know to do that. So I definitely, that was something that was just an example of advice I've taken her from classmates, you know, here and even an Undergrad just to be like, oh, okay, I didn't know that was a thing. So,
- Speaker 1: [10:37](#) Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino?
- Speaker 2: [10:41](#) Uh, I identify as a Latinx because I'm, you know, I'm gay and I like to identify, you know, Latinx just because I kind of, I prefer that.
- Speaker 1: [10:55](#) Yeah. And is there a reason why you prefer the term Latinx over Hispanic?
- Speaker 2: [10:59](#) Yeah, I think it's, I'm definitely more inclusive. Um, we don't live in Hispaniola. Um, I don't know, it just, it, it seems to be like a more welcoming. I don't know, maybe that's just me,
- Speaker 1: [11:14](#) 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 are viewed in this country?
- Speaker 2: [11:25](#) I think it'll definitely affect how race and race relations are viewed in the future. Um, in a positive way. I think right now we can see that it's affecting views in a negative and worrisome way. Um, I have plenty of my own views on how, how a growing minority majority state makes some populations worried. So I mean that's just, that's just changed. So.

- Speaker 1: [11:57](#) How do you maintain your Latinx culture and being a student?
- Speaker 2: [12:03](#) Let's see. I listen to a lot of great music on my Spotify. I just try to watch my novelas with subtitles on Netflix. I kind of just stay in touch with my parents. Um, now that I'm an adult, they kind of are more willing to share, you know, more of our Mexican culture and stuff with me. Um, and then yeah, just trying to, here it's a little harder to find, uh, you know, other minority students. But whenever I do find, I don't know, we just kind of have that in common.
- Speaker 1: [12:37](#) So, and uh, what are some challenges you face if the university and here at Oxford as a Latinx student?
- Speaker 2: [12:48](#) Interestingly, it's not really, I don't really have challenges. It's weird, like I don't feel like I have challenges at the law school with my, with being Latinx. Um, I don't really, I, I, like I said, I guess that must just be because the law school has people from all over the country, um, but I definitely understand why it's different on the main campus. And then in Oxford, um, you know, it's just the normal, like you get those looks or you get those little subtleties, you know, when you're somewhere or you're, you know, those are the difficulties. I think people here are too polite or try to be too polite to at least be up, be overtly racist to me. So far I've had people be homophobic, but that's, you know, that's separate. So.
- Speaker 1: [13:46](#) Has anyone ever asked you about your race or ethnicity and how do you typically respond to these questions?
- Speaker 2: [13:53](#) Um, usually when people ask me because I have had people asking about right my race, um, I kinda just try to gauge where they're coming from and um, usually if it's funny, if it's a bit like a fellow minority, I don't take it as personally as if it's like a white person asking me because here it almost seems like a, you need to like justify who you are, what you are. So, um, I don't know, it's weird. I've responded, I wouldn't say it that rudely, but I've been short. And how do these questions typically, I guess present themselves?
- Speaker 1: How do people typically ask? Literally out of the blue?

Speaker 2: Um, I was at the grove one time and someone was like, what are you? I was at the bar one again, you know, just I feel like when, when alcohol is involved here, people feel a lot more comfortable just blurting things out that they probably wouldn't say normally because it's never come up on campus. It always comes up in social settings.

Speaker 1: [15:14](#) And um, have you ever experienced any assumptions about your character because of your perceived race or ethnicity?

Speaker 2: Not that I've noticed. I don't know what people, I don't know what's in people's minds, but at least so far I haven't so far.

Speaker 1: [15:38](#) And do you speak Spanish? If yes, how did you learn? If no, why not?

Speaker 2: [15:43](#) I speak very bad Spanish. I've been trying to learn for the last three years, um, and I've just learned, you know, through schools and through classes at the university I'm studying abroad. I don't speak fluent Spanish. My parents. Yeah. They didn't want me to.

Speaker 1: [16:13](#) Is there a reason why you were not taught Spanish In the home?

Speaker 2: [16:16](#) Yeah. Just because, you know, the whole assimilation thing just to fit in. They taught my two older siblings, uh, because I'm from a family of eight, so they taught my two older siblings and they were teased and made fun of, for having accents and speaking Spanish. So they just decided not to teach anybody else after that

Speaker 1: [16:35](#) How do you feel about that?

Speaker 2: [16:39](#) I regret it and I try not to hold it. I don't, I used to hold it against my parents. Um, now I understand why they did it. Um, if anything I think I just think it's a sad fact of life. So.

Speaker 1: [16:55](#) And um, how important is the ability to speak Spanish to the Latinx culture?

Speaker 2: [17:02](#) Well, I think it, I think that it's important should depend on each individual person. Um, I don't think we should limit people being a part of the community based on their ability to speak Spanish though. Yeah.

- Speaker 1: [17:23](#) And how does the university and the community cater to the Latinx population?
- Speaker 2: [17:29](#) Um, well we have the, you know, the Latin heritage month. That was pretty cool. That was interesting to see. Um, I'm dying to see how people do think with Cinco de Mayo here. I can only imagine how awful, how awful or problematic, you know, whatever it should be that, that'll be interesting to see what I mean. You know, it's uh, you know, we have LLSA at law school and I know we have the Undergrad organization. I just haven't had a chance to interact with them yet. So I mean, oh, and then we have a couple restaurants here in town, but I don't really enjoy the food. So I tried it, but, you know, maybe I just haven't found the right one yet.
- Speaker 1: [18:20](#) I guess to counter that, how does the university and the community omit the Latino population?
- Speaker 2: [18:25](#) I would say by making everything about, you know, it's like very much like about duality here. It's just like it's everything is a black and white issue and nothing's outside of that. It seems like, is that weird to say like that's how you feel? That's a valid point, you know, maybe. And I don't know, maybe that's, I don't know, that's just it. It's like, you know, we have all these ICE raids and stuff going on in an Oxford, Mississippi, but nobody is mad about it and like nobody says anything about it. Um, so to me that's very interesting. I, I, but I, I can understand why. It's Mississippi's history. Um, I just, I, that was very interesting to me right off the bat was how everything here is still very much just like a, yeah, like a black and white issue and nothing else. Yeah.
- Speaker 1: [19:32](#) And um, how do you view race in the US in the south, in here in Oxford?
- Speaker 2: [19:38](#) Um, I would view race as a concept that's definitely changing. I'm slowly, uh, I think now people definitely understand that like even within races themselves, there's like sub subgroups, subcategories, breakdowns within breakdowns. So I think that's interesting seeing how people are finally realizing that because I feel like minority communities have always recognized that. Um, but in the south I think it's still very much a duality. And in Oxford, um, I don't think people really think about it a lot. Maybe

that's just me, but I don't, it doesn't seem like it's. Well, it seems like the majority of people don't think about it here. And when you try to talk about it they get very uncomfortable. So.

Speaker 1: [20:46](#) And um, how do perceive the Latinx population effecting the idea of race in the south?

Speaker 2: **I think it will open the eyes of more people in the south to realize that there's, you know, entire populations that are being ignored in the south. Not even just the Latinx community.** There's like, you know, entire communities of like Vietnamese and Filipino people in Mississippi alone, which I still have classmates who find that fascinating and I'm like, I don't know, I'm not even from here. And I just did a wikipedia search and I knew that like, or you know, we just have, you know, like exchange students from all over the world and I just don't see that. I don't know. I don't. Yeah. And hopefully it just opens people's mind is what I guess I'm getting at. It opens their mind.

Speaker 1: [21:42](#) Are there any other points or topics that you'd like to discuss that I didn't ask you?

Speaker 2: [22:04](#) I guess one thing I would add is, um, it's very interesting not seeing any kind of. And I say I say queer law, Latinx community. I don't, I'm, I have, I'm sure. Well, I have friends who say other words, I prefer that term. Um, but it's interesting not seeing any kind of LGBTQ I presence at all in Mississippi like on the square or anything. Um, so that's, that's interesting because, you know, that's a minority within a minority within a minority. So, you know, it's, it's been interesting. That's the, that's an interesting adjustment that I've had to face here too. So. Yeah, yeah.