

## Perla Viveros LeSure transcript

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Are you 18 years or older? And can you state and spell your first and last name for the record?
- Speaker 2: [00:52](#) On my social security number it says Perla Viveros LeSure.
- Speaker 1: [01:07](#) And when were you born?
- Speaker 2: I was born May 9th, 1996.
- Speaker 1: Where are you from and where did you grow up?
- Speaker 2: [01:37](#) Originally from Mexico. I was born and raised there for the first three years of my life, but around my third year when I was three years old, that was when me and my mother, we transitioned to the United States and we ended up coming into Sardis, Mississippi. But it wasn't initially where I was raised. I was raised in various states, honestly, uh, I spent maybe a year in Sardis went to head start, uh, in the, the main reason why my parents put me or they wanted me to go through head start was because, so I can pick up the English language because whenever I came here I had no lick of English or anything like that. On the other hand, I was pretty much traumatized and the fact that I was putting a classroom full of people who I couldn't understand. And, uh, from then on I was able to be, to be able to participate in kindergarten because a lot of the problem right now is that a lot of children who come from Mexico or any other part of the Latin American countries, whenever they come from there to here, they normally set them back a year behind because they want them to pick up the English language. Well, for me it was different because I was here at a young age and I was put through headstart to pick up the language first. And then I went to kindergarten in Illinois. And then I took a whole year there for kindergarten. Then from there we were typical Hispanic family that would move because of work and basically nomadic. And um, I moved to Michigan for maybe the first, my first semester.
- Speaker 1: From then, you made it back to Batesville, Mississippi from Michigan. For your first semester of first grade?
- Speaker 2: Yes ma'am. I'm sorry I wasn't clear. Uh, and then we moved down to Batesville, Mississippi. I went to first grade in Batesville, maybe two months. And then after that we moved to Knoxville, Tennessee. And I finished first grade there completely, and I stayed there until the end of the summer and then we moved down to the Jackson area. We all lived in Richland. So I went to Richland Elementary School over there in Mississippi. And I did my second grade there. And then after I finished second grade, we all moved to South Carolina. I was

there for third grade. And then from then on I'll moved to Marion, Indiana and I did my fourth grade year there. But then I guess fourth grade is the time whenever you're starting to develop. And I was starting to develop, um, I was starting to develop as a young lady and you know, my mom talked to my dad and he said, well, you know, this type of lifestyle isn't for her, especially since she's grown up and, you know, we're typical Hispanic family that a whole that we live as a family and it's like maybe three families in one big house in like maybe extended cousins and all of that. And it was just a lot of males. And my mom, my parents didn't want me to put me through that, so they decided to settle down and my parents decided to settle down in Batesville, Mississippi. So we moved down to Batesville, Mississippi in fifth grade and I've been here ever since. So that's my whole entire life being raised. And personally I don't think I was specifically raised in one place. I was raised in southern and northern culture and I was able to get that cultural shock at a young age because I do know that I went to school where there was some Hispanics that were in different grades or there were some that were in my grades, but we were in different age ranges and I did go to a school where I was the first Hispanic to go there and I was the only one there. And it was a really big shock to everybody. They were predominantly white and black and it was really shocking in them that there is somebody who is not like them who could speak another language because I was the first Hispanic and I was the first one to be like the first foreign person basically. It was really strange to me. It was strange because I thought this was normal, you know, and when we add being eight years old, I was like, I thought this was normal, but it wasn't. It is what it is. But then I was raised in Batesville, Mississippi and that's where I've been.

Speaker 1:

Why did you decide to move from Batesville to Oxford?

Speaker 2:

[07:14](#)

Well, I am a DACA recipient so I don't get any scholarships and if I do get any type of scholarships and I'd have to move to California, Arizona or any of the heavily populated Hispanic states. And I simply didn't think I could afford that honestly, uh, during the time I was filing my FAFSA and everything, my father, he wasn't a citizen, he was a permanent resident. And then my parents pay taxes and everything like that. They did the legal stuff in the United States, but, you know, it still wasn't enough for me to be able to even qualify just because it was simple reason, I wasn't a permanent resident or citizen so. Well my parents, they talked to me and they sat down with me. They told me that, you know, that they were willing to pay my college tuition full paid out. If I could take out student loans, which I know that we can take out student loans, it's just more heavily interest on us than what it would be to a normal United States of American here. Um, so my parents told me that, you know, you have a really great school down the road. If you stay home

with us, we'll pay for your college. We'll pay for your textbooks, we'll pay for your car, gas, food, everything. So that's mainly the reason why I came to Ole Miss. It wasn't even really because I wanted to come here because I did apply for other schools. I applied for the Catholic University of America and I applied for NYU and I was uh, accepted into them, but because of tuition, because of, you know, just, just trying to be affordable, I couldn't pay for it. I ended up coming home and found out Ole Miss business school is one of the best of the United States and I was just like, Huh. And I'm sitting here trying to leave somewhere else when I have one of the best schools of business down the road. So it worked out. It worked out. I was pretty content with where I came that I came here and that I was able to, you know, get a prestigious degree.

Speaker 1:

Is race an important part of your identity? Why or why not?

Speaker 2:

[10:04](#)

Well, race, you could probably say that it is an important part of my identity. And the reason why is because I'm a proud Latina. I'm a proud Hispanic, but I wasn't raised around anyone besides my family. I wasn't raised around other Hispanics, so I never really got that culture from other Hispanics. I only got the culture from my parents or my aunts. That's it. And I was actually, I was actually not raised with them after the age of 10. I'm 22 years old right now as it's been 12 years since I've really, and honestly had a relationship myself with other Hispanics and it's been a big part of me because I'm proud of who I am. Do I exactly know my culture? No, I don't because I wasn't exposed to it and it wasn't even much of my parents' fault. It was more of because there wasn't many Hispanics here or wherever I was. And um, I know whenever growing up I did have a mom, both my parents worked and I had a black nanny. And the reason why I say black is because her perspective on life and her telling me how things are really impacted me because now that I look at it now as a grownup, it's true what she said because she, uh, she told me, um, baby, you're my baby to me, you will like my little black baby, my little Latino baby. But whenever you start to grow up to these white people, you will be not them. You will never be close to their circle because you don't have their facial features. They know you're different. They can see that. They know in your face that you're different. And on the other end with black folks, you're automatically, we categorize you as white because you don't have our skin color or our skin tone. And I never really understood it because I was like, but I'm not black or white. I'm Mexican. I want to be both. I want to be like you. And she said, I know baby. But you know, whenever you grow up you will see in you now maybe being or not. Now I do see it. Like, you know, I don't fit in with white people because of them. I'm different. I speak another language, my views are completely different from them because, you know, white supremacy and everything like that and I'm looking at it from the eyes of a minority that's not

black. And then I go to and then whenever I hang out with some white people or I meet some people that are like, oh, it's the white girl. So immediately then say it's the white girl, you know, that kind of reflects to you that, you know, in their eyes, even if they can definitely tell that I'm not exactly why they still automatically categorize me as white. So it has been a big part of my identity. But you know, I have learned to face and say, no, I'm not this. No, I am not mixed because I get that a lot. I get asked, are you mixed with Puerto Rican? No, I'm Mexican, full blooded Mexican and I'm proud to say that.

Speaker 1:

And how has your experience been at Ole Miss?

Speaker 2:

It's been scary, especially with the Trump administration and everything like that. Just him running for presidency was completely horrible because I was, I was scared. I was in accounting class, and whenever he was elected president, somebody from behind me said a white male from behind me. He said, Oh, you're not from here and go back to your country. So I don't exactly feel welcomed here in all reality because, you know, it's uh, I mean we're in the south. The majority of the people here are all Republican. I even get it from both sides of the spectrum, the African Americans and the white people. I get it from both sides, and they say you come here to steal our jobs, you come here to take away our education and I'm just like, um, I paid just as much as anybody else does or probably even more. But you know it, it's been pretty hard, you know, and I know whenever I was doing an interview or a panel discussion panel for the Latin American heritage month, I know there's this other, this other girl, she's a law student and she said that it really shocked her and you know, her sister even told her that, you know, she need a lower down her Latinidad. And that shocked me too because I'm like, why would somebody say that? But I can see it. I can see why she said it. And even she said, you know, I could see why she said it, but that wasn't going to stop me. So, you know. Yeah. I get asked, do I have a green card? Yeah. I get asked if I'm a citizen and yes, I get asked if I'm going to go back to Mexico to my own country and I tell them, you know, I have dual citizenship. I don't have to tell you what my immigration status is, and you don't have a right to even know. So, you know, the only thing that it did catch me off guard was whenever I stopped by the police and he asked me do you have your immigration papers? And I had to sit there and I had to show them because I was scared for my life. I was scared I was going to get deported and I wasn't going to be able to see my family or my husband. So I was like, I ready to comply with the law and not be put in a situation. I don't need to be in that situation here in Lafayette County. It was here in Oxford. It was right before Krystals in, in that gas station. I was stopped by OPD. He was a black male officer and he asked me, you know, I didn't feel any type of malice from him but it was still the fact

that he asked me, you know, do you have your immigration papers with you? And I had to show him, you know, my immigration document and you know, I did ask, um, answered, why do I have to show you this? And he said, well, I'm just trying to make sure that you're able to be here. And I said, okay.

Speaker 1: So it, was this the first thing that he said to you when he pulled you over or how did that conversation transpire?

Speaker 2: They typically ask license and registration insurance. He looked at my registration. He looked at my insurance, then he looked at my license and he saw that it clearly says non-US citizen. So he, I guess out of curiosity he asked, you know, uh, where you from and do you have your immigration papers? And at that time I was scared and I did decide to comply with him and not go against him because I didn't know. I didn't know if ICE was around there for the time being. So I decided to comply at that moment.

Speaker 1: What is your major, your classification and some involvement?

Speaker 2: I am a managerial finance major and I'm a senior. I will be graduating in May and any involvement the on campus at this point in time, I have no involvement because I'm trying to solely dedicate myself to my major because it's been a workload honestly. And, but I would say I did try, I have tried to participate like in the Big Event and the pink walk for Breast Cancer Awareness. I was part of the group of ESTEEM and I mean I've, I've tried to be involved and you know, do something and not just not doing anything.

Speaker 1: [19:28](#) What are the most important aspects of your life right now? And what aspects as in like the most important parts of your life? The most important things in your life right now?

Speaker 2: The most important things in my life right now are my, probably I would say my education right now, my marriage and my siblings. And the reason why is because you know, oh, sorry, my marriage is because I have a, he's an amazing person and he supported me through everything. He's actually the first one who I told him I'm here illegally. I was in junior high and he actually thought it was pretty cool, which was kind of weird that, you know, throughout the, throughout the years. And then once we started dating, he was more involved in the political immigration aspect of it. And he agrees to a certain extent. He sees what is wrong, what is right, what can be done legally, you know, and that's understandable, you know, but even he supports what I do and he supports me. That's the most important thing and well my education, while I mean what's more important than having a minority with a bachelor's degree in this world now. So it's

pretty. It's pretty important. You know, you really can't get paid really good if you don't have a degree. And then my siblings as. Because I guess I teach them about the real world and how whenever you, whenever you get outside of high school, people think differently. There's people that are going to be accepting of you and there's people who are not willing to be accepting of you. Like people who you grew up with are not the people who are going to stay in your life because whenever you branch out, you go to different schools, you know you're going to face racism, you're going to face prejudice. I'm, you're going to face love. You're going to face kindness of different source. You're going to face different things that you never faced whenever you were raised with the same people over and over. You know. So I can honestly say those are three aspects of my life right now.

- Speaker 1: [21:53](#) The U.S. Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity are two different concepts. What is your ethnicity?
- Speaker 2: [22:04](#) Well, my ethnicity, um, if it says Hispanic or Latino. I don't understand that. Like I don't because I can't bubble in anything in the race because I'm, the only options they have is Pacific Islander, White Caucasian, African American. And I think that's. Or Alaskan. And then for ethnicity they have Hispanic and Latino, which are brilliant. Honestly, don't understand what's the difference between Hispanic, Latino and race because I thought, you know, I mean we're all people.
- Speaker 1: [22:55](#) If somebody just asks you what is your ethnicity, what would you say?
- Speaker 2: [23:09](#) Hispanic, Latino just means that you're from a country in America and there are so many countries in Latin America that they don't speak Spanish. So I consider myself Hispanic and Latino because you know, I'm from Mexico and I speak Spanish so I would say I'm both.
- Speaker 1: Um, and how do you identify racially?
- Speaker 2: Uh, I guess it's Mexican.
- Speaker 1: Okay. What are your parent's nationality? Do you identify with your parents' nationality?
- Speaker 2: Like I mentioned earlier, I identify with them. One hundred percent, but it is a little different because I was raised in the United States of America. So the way they were raised, I don't completely agree with their own point of views. I don't completely agree and that's just because I was born, I was raised differently, but other than that I don't, I don't defy the fact that

my parents are 100 percent Mexican and I am too. So, you know, it is what it is. That's who I'm proud of.

Speaker 1: Do you identify as Hispanic or Latina? Which one do you prefer or do not have a preference?

Speaker 2: I don't have a preference because I was born in Latin America, and Hispanic is just people who speak Spanish. So I'm both.

Speaker 1: Studies show that the 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: Oh, what's going to affect everything? And I'm all here for it because uh, the implementation of Spanish and just an education and the young in young children's education right now in Texas for example, I have a friend, she lives in Texas. Uh, their school programs are teaching English one semester, like full on English another semester. They're teaching it and full on Spanish. So you get your test papers in Spanish, you get everything in Spanish. So I do think that that is very important because growing up as a native Spanish speaker and heavily populated English speaking country are do believe. Being able to manipulate both language is important because Spanish is one of the top three languages spoken in the whole world along with English and I believe an Asian Chinese Mandarin. So I do think it is that the more heavily populated the Hispanic community or Latino community does grow in the United States, the more there is going to be a requirement of people here knowing how to speak Spanish or being able to communicate with them simply as that because there's a lot of people that they're coming here that don't know English or they might know English but they don't know how to speak it correctly. It's like it's to them, it's like for a person here who speaks, who wants to try to speak Spanish in the classroom, and then they go down there and they're like, crap, what are you saying? So it can be the same way.

Speaker 1: And how do you maintain a, your Latina culture while being a student here at university?

Speaker 2: My Latino culture up whenever I get phone calls, I speak Spanish. Uh, whenever I get asked, oh, what language I speak, I speak, I'll tell them proud Latina, I speak Spanish, you know, from months ago, whenever I got asked where I'm from, I tell them I'm from Mexico. I don't really tell them all details like Batesville, Mississippi. If they asked me where I live, I do tell them Batesville, Mississippi. But I mean, my main thing is, you know, I celebrate moments. Mexican culture dates like the Independence Day of Mexico was in September, you know? I mean we celebrate, um, in December since I am Catholic, you

know, and the majority of Mexicans are Catholic. They celebrate the Virgin Mary's birthday on December 12th. So that's coming up and we end up celebrating Christmas on the 24th going until the 25th. So, you know, I do try to keep my Latina or Hispanic culture around me. It's just, do I put it out there like a mall Christmas tree? No, but if somebody hears me speaking or they just randomly asked me, Oh, where are you from? I'm not afraid to tell them, you know, and you know, it's just kind of one of those normal things. It's just some normal person walking.

Speaker 1:

And what are some challenges you face at the university and in Oxford as a Latina?

Speaker 2:

Prejudice. The racism. How a lot of stuff keeps happening. But nobody really points out. Like whenever ICE was here, uh, honestly, I didn't even know about until somebody told me and then I saw the, the white van just down the road and I was just like, oh crap. And I called my mom immediately. I was like, don't come to Oxford. And then you know, she called her friends and then her friends called and that's how we spread the word. But, you know, what I don't like is that, you know, I understand that there are criminals out there, but you know, what I don't understand is why would you take somebody's innocent family? Why would you try to separate somebody from their children? I just wish there was more awareness on situations like this that is truly happening. It has nothing that's on tv or what they say on tv about like how children are being kept and camps and all this and that. No, like, you know, that's just publicity, that's just media and reality and whether it's happening or not, you know, that's fine, you know, to make it aware. But I feel like you shouldn't just make aware what's going on in certain areas because it's happening all over, like it's happening in Memphis is happening. Hernando it's happening. It's happening in Jackson, you know, so I, that's what I don't like about here is that, you know, I feel like they don't care about the Hispanic community. On the other hand, I feel like they may think it's like a nuisance to have Hispanics except for weekends for cheaper margarita does Cinco de Mayo, you know, stuff like that. Then that's whenever we get recognized. But other than that, I mean I feel like we're not thought about, we're not told these are your rights even though you're here legally or illegally, these are your rights. You can still exercise those rights, you know, so that, that's my problem here. It's just I feel like we, nobody cares.

Speaker 1:

And has anyone ever asked you about your race or your ethnicity and how you typically respond to these questions?

Speaker 2:

Yes. I've gotten asked all the time and I've gotten asked, are you mixed? Are you mixed with something? No, I'm 100 percent Mexican. And they're like, oh, okay. And I'm like, yeah, I'm

pretty chill about it that, you know, it also depends on who asks you because you know, there's people who, they come, and they asked. You can feel the men, the vibe of of them. You can feel the, that one to make like evil aro from them, you know, there's just, you just, you feel it, you feel it whenever somebody is asking you to cause you harm. So to those people, I mean, I told him, you know, I'm Mexican, do you have a problem? And if they have something to say to me that no, that shouldn't be said and I tell them, you know, I don't have time for you or anything like that, but somebody who's out of curiosity, they asked me, you know, where you're from. I gladly smile at them and tell them, you know, Oh, I'm from here and here and here. And if they proceed to ask me questions about my culture and if I speak Spanish and all this, I gladly tell them, you know.

- Speaker 1: [32:50](#) And have you ever experienced any assumptions about your character because of your identity? So like has anyone ever said something to you or about you or stereotyped you in any way ?
- Speaker 2: [33:04](#) I got asked if I jumped the border or if I crossed the river or if I was a wetback or anything like that. And I was just like, no, I'm a dryback. I came on the airplane.
- Speaker 1: [34:52](#) And do you speak Spanish? If yes, how did you learn?
- Speaker 2: [34:55](#) Yes, I do know how to speak Spanish, that I learned how to speak Spanish from the womb, so I was born with it.
- Speaker 1: [35:06](#) How important is the ability to speak Spanish to the Latino culture?
- Speaker 2: [35:09](#) I think it's super important. I really do think it is because I mean just the brain structure and brain development, what you can do with your brain is completely amazing. Just being able to balance and, you know, forgot the correct term. It's code switching code switching a that is completely, um, that is a complete brain function that only dual or more late bilingual people develop and that's whenever you immediately have different, you can, your brain reacts at a faster pace because you have to transition from one language to another, which I do believe it helps your motor skills and it helps multitasking. So I do believe it is important for you for your own brain development and what. I mean it helps you for your job interviews, you know, more than two lane, you know, more than one language it differently. It looks really good on you and you also help your Hispanic community. Whenever you know that there's somebody or you can tell there's somebody that is on the side of the street, they don't know where they're going or they're speaking Spanish and you can actually understand them and they need help so you can help them.

Speaker 1: So, you know, and how has the university and the community cater to the general population?

Speaker 2: There was a Hispanic heritage month. Was it heavily broadcasted and advertised across campus? No, it wasn't, but did I enjoy it? Yes, I do. It was really lovely. I wish that, you know, it was more advertised because I do believe there are more Hispanics on this campus that they're probably afraid to come out saying, oh, Hispanic or anything like that. Yeah, probably. I do think so. So I do. I would like to see the campus cater more Hispanic events. Not specifically, you know, Mexicans, but you know, all around Latin America, you know, and cater some more, you know, bring out that awareness of Oh, this is what happened on this day in this country, you know, you know, show that you care a little.

Speaker 1: How do you view race in the U.S., in the South and here in Oxford?

Speaker 2: [39:17](#) Well, race in the south it's very black and white, very, very black and white. And I feel like, you know, what's mainly portrayed in the media is black and white. It's either that or something about the religion, you know. And that tool is very, not necessarily pertaining to black white people or white people now that I just think it's, you know, it's either you're a Christian or you're something else. So I do think it's very black and white, black and white and not meeting in the gray zone or the gray zone is being omitted in. It's like this is what matters gray zone that they don't matter. So that's what I feel like it is in the United States and America and the south. Well it's very black and white to is either you're this or you're that and you really don't have room for other minorities. And I'm speaking about minorities as in people from Saudi Arabia. There's been A. I know I've seen, there's been a lot more, you know, Indian people, a lot more a Middle Eastern people come to the United States are there, it's more Hispanics coming into and it's just more minorities that are not just blacks or native Americans or anything like that. It's just here in the south it's very black and white and then gray areas omitted. And I guess it's because of the history too. I mean the Jim crow laws and all that stuff that happened, so it was training on bullying. I guess if he can see where that point of view comes from and well here in Oxford, I mean I think it's a, it's a very big melting pot because you have different perspectives and in Oxford is very diverse too so I feel like it's more not necessarily black and white. It's more like grayish because you have. Because you do have some of the white people that do support their Hispanics. You do have something to black people that they support their Hispanics. You have Hispanics. I support the Indians. You have a hispanics that support the Muslims. There's, you know, everybody supports or everybody trusts to support each other.

But mainly you see that in the, in the, in our generation. You and make me some time. I do think I've seen it was an older generation too, but mainly is with our younger generation, especially with today with the, with the Poles and the voting and everything. I do feel like, you know, a lot of our generation, they are sharp and see, you know, your voice does count and I hope we, we've made a good decision.

Speaker 1:

How do you perceive the population affecting the idea of race in the south?

Speaker 2:

I feel like it, it can affect it really big because, you know, I think it can affect the population. I do. The race, um, the idea of race in the south. How does Latinos effect? Well, I mean simply the fact that, you know, the majority of Latinos are in this, they come to the south or they go towards the West where California and all that is. But you know, I do feel like a lot of them do come towards the south because you know, it's warmer and let's be real. Let's be realistic. A lot of Hispanics, they don't like the cold but he, they're mainly in the Sol and I mean you're starting to see more Hispanics around here and you're trying. And it's not as big of a cultural shock as it was maybe 12, 15 or 12, 15 years ago. So I do believe people are getting more accustomed to see different people or people who speak different languages. Is it in a positive way or a negative way? Probably there's people who don't, you know, there are people who have told me no, you have to be. If you're up here, you have to speak English. You can't be speaking Spanish and all this and that. They would try to deprive you of your own language that has happened in. But it's all right. You know. So I do feel like, you know, it is going to make a good image is going to make an impact on the race as in the south. It won't be just, you know, so black and white. It be more of what they call of a melting pot.