

## Rosa Gonzalez transcript

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) We are recording and we'll go ahead and jump right in. I'm just trying to find the questions in here. I'm giving you both the questions. That's your copy. Okay. All right. Um, so the date is November fourth and we are conducting an interview for my thesis research titled The Latino South Race and racialization. So we'll go ahead and jump right on in. Um, are you 18 years or older? Okay. And can you state and spell your first and last name for the record?
- Speaker 2: [00:38](#) Rosa Salas Gonzalez.
- Speaker 1: [00:50](#) And um, where are you from and where did you grow up?
- Speaker 2: [00:53](#) I am from and I grew up in South America.
- Speaker 1: [00:57](#) Okay. And uh, what other places have you also lived in?
- Speaker 2: [01:01](#) I've only lived there. I've traveled a lot, but I've only ever lived there.
- Speaker 1: [01:05](#) And um, what brought you from Venezuela to Mississippi?
- Speaker 2: [01:12](#) It was just school, like the opportunity of going to college here.
- Speaker 1: [01:17](#) And how did you hear about this opportunity area or this specific university?
- Speaker 2: [01:21](#) Yeah, so this specific university, it was my friend Ingrid, she came here before I did. I took a gap year and then I kind of like followed her, uh, but she recommend that it a lot and not by to other places, but it ended up being the best option for me. So that's why I came.
- Speaker 1: [01:37](#) Okay. And um, is race an important part of your identity? Why or why not?
- Speaker 2: [01:43](#) I think it is, um, I know it is. Um, it's very easy to kind of forget sometimes that the way I see things is not the same way other people see it. Um, but I think that growing up in another country really makes me the person that I am right now, like even the things that I enjoy doing are the things that I don't enjoy doing or the food that I like or the fit that I don't like. Um, I think the like that the fact that I was born somewhere else and somewhere else and grew up with these ideals makes me different person.
- Speaker 1: [02:24](#) Can you give a little bit more insight as to maybe how you view race or how you were raised to view raised at home versus

coming here to the United States and especially Mississippi where it can still be kind of complicated.

Speaker 2: [02:39](#)

I think we have a lot of people back at home that are Italian descent, descendant or whatever you say, or like Arabic, but they still see themselves as Venezuelan. Mostly I think from what I can gather from, you know, hanging out with us people. And I always thought of myself like for, for Venezuela and because we don't have that much of like outsider, like heritage I guess. But um, I think that it's very different in the sense that from where, where I grew up, it wasn't like that there was the, there were that many issues of like, kind of like people feeling unhappy because of that. And I think it's because I, it's kind of hard to talk about it, you know, like if you're not from there, but I don't feel like it was this controversial. I'm talking about race was very normal. People living jokes sometimes and it wasn't offensive and it was never, like, it never felt defensive and then here it's like you have to be a little more careful because um, it has been so bad and like it still is so bad with um, some of like the racial, like problems, like, you know, police brutality and all that stuff and segregation like so you have to be more careful when you talk about this things here.

Speaker 2: [04:04](#)

So it's very hard to Kinda like think about it and like it I used to live in a country that was so kind of like they didn't care about anything that was related to race that I dunno. It's interesting. When you come here and how has your experience been living in Oxford and being a student at the university? I honestly, I've had a great experience. Like I somehow ended up with a lot of friends from Mississippi. Like it was just, I guess the, the friends that I made, the first couple of friends that I made were from Mississippi. So I have a lot of friends that are from Mississippi and they tell me things and I'm like, wow, like, that's interesting, you know, like Kinda like, oh yeah, I grew up in his school and like, like we didn't have that many. Like they didn't, they didn't go to school.

Speaker 2: [04:55](#)

I can say like, I went to school and I went with a bunch of people from, not from but with families from Italy and families from a linear Lebanese families and stuff like that. And a lot of them are like, yeah, like I just grew up with a bunch of white people are like, I just grew up with a bunch of people who look like me, you know. So That's interesting. But I've, I've enjoyed my time here. Like I felt very included. Of course there's sometimes that I'm like, oh, people are so um, uncle to, you know, they don't understand the, the, it's not just black and white and there's just like more than that, you know. Can you give some examples of when people are, I guess uncultured or. I mean, even like the smallest little things like, oh, where are you from? I say Vanessa.

- Speaker 2: [05:46](#) And they're like, oh, what part of Mexico is that? And it's like, dude, like it's not just in Mexico and the United States, like it's, there's a bunch of other countries. It's being Spanish. There's a bunch of other countries that like fall into that Latino, you know, I'm like, a lot of people don't understand that and a lot of people like thinking like, oh, you know, like you talk about it, right. But it's like I can't wait to go to Mexico and have some repairs. And I'm like, no, I mean they're two completely different cultures that because we have, we share that language and a lot of like we share music, we share language, we share a slang, we shared TV. So while a lot of admits this together and we can have like a relationship that probably the United States can have with anything else because you only speak English based, not only but like mainly speak English.
- Speaker 2: [06:41](#) Um, I think people just don't understand that there's more that it's not like you can define Latino with one specific word, nationality, like there's so many different like views of being Latino, you know, like I can say like, Oh yeah, like I, I feel so Latino and I like go to my house and I need some rip us and like listen to guide that which is our traditional music. Um, and other people can say like, oh, well it feels so Latino when I go home and I drink matt. Then I like listen to whatever they listen in Argentina, you know, like some alternative rock music, you know, like that's, that's also Latino and people don't understand that.
- Speaker 1: [07:31](#) What is your major classification and maybe some notable notable and bond method you have on camera?
- Speaker 2: [07:37](#) So I am actually, I just got into the BFA program and ceramic, so that's basically like an undergrad level degree, but it's more specialized in a, in an area. So it's an art, it's an art degree. And then I'm a senior. And then what was the other question? So right now I'm at say director, which is the student activities association and I'll be done with that and like definitely not semester, I can't remember, like maybe February and I'm also involved with the ceramics club of course because we have to be in class so I'm like vice president with another girl and we just kinda like put up events for essay for all students and for Mcdonald's we do sales and um, we have visiting artists come into town and stuff like that.
- Speaker 1: [08:25](#) Cool. And what are the most important aspects of your life right now and why?
- Speaker 2: [08:31](#) I mean, I will say for sure it's, it's the fact that I'm trying to build a career I guess or like trying to understand myself as an artist. That's probably one of the biggest things, if not the biggest thing that I'm dealing with right now. Of course trying to pay for

college because I have to stay a fifth year. So I'm trying to figure those things out. Um, like a lot of my recent like struggles have been trying to figure out a way to get enough money to be able to stay for a fifth year or like um, being able to change my, not change but like extend my visa because it's only for four years and I'll have to send it for longer. So those are definitely the things that have been, like struggling the most with and besides, you know, the regular, like a home, an artist I struggle, you know,

- Speaker 1: [09:19](#) and the US Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity is two different concepts. What is your ethnicity?
- Speaker 2: [09:31](#) Uh, I, I mean I'm Venezuelan, you know, I never thought, I never thought that there were different, you know, I guess it's because I didn't give it that much of a thought.
- Speaker 1: [09:44](#) Yeah. And what are your parent's nationality and do you identify with your nationality?
- Speaker 2: [09:51](#) Yeah, as Venice Felon were from there, grew up there.
- Speaker 1: [09:55](#) Okay. And um, how do you identify racially and why do you identify this way?
- Speaker 2: [10:04](#) I mean, I am Latina, you know, like I'm very aware of that at all. I don't think I've ever like try to define myself that heart to be like, oh, I'm not Latino on this because I heard other people say like, I'm Latina, it's or whatever. But um,
- Speaker 2: [10:22](#) what was I, I mean, identify that way because I grew up in Venice, in Venezuela. I grew up in a Latino country and I grew up with like a very wide, uh, be on other countries that are Latino, you know, I had friends that were from the art, from Colombia and they lived there and I went to visit them. I have friends from Argentina, have friends that are from what, why I have friends who were everywhere in Latino Medica and including a Spain where they speak Spanish. So I think that all of those things and all of that connection with other people has shaped me even though I'm not like Columbia and know a lot of Columbia's laying, you know, so, um, we all love to watch soccer and all that stuff. So, um, and it's not like, oh, I'm a stereotypical Latino person. It's like, no, I grew up knowing all these things. So like, well it doesn't necessarily define me as a whole, like it definitely affects my life, you know?
- Speaker 1: [11:27](#) Um, when you were living in Venezuela, was the term Latino something common that you use to identify yourself? What was, or was that after you get moved to the United States?

- Speaker 2: [11:37](#) I really don't think it was. And I could be wrong. I could just be like, overlooking at, but I don't think so. No, it was. We never thought of. I never thought of race. I'm not going to say wait, I never thought of raised that much. Um, I knew there were other countries. I have friends from other countries, but I was never like, oh, like Latino power and, and, and, and I am, you know, but I don't think it was that intense. I definitely talked about it, but because like we all have a mutual understand then without even have to say it, that we were all Latino and we didn't have to say it.
- Speaker 3: [12:21](#) You know,
- Speaker 1: [12:25](#) studies show that the Latino population is growing in the United States. Oh wait, I skipped a question. Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino or Latina?
- Speaker 2: [12:35](#) I just, I don't know why, but Latino, Latina, both. Either way.
- Speaker 1: [12:40](#) Is there a specific reason or just.
- Speaker 2: [12:44](#) No, not really. I just Hispanic just sounds so formal. Like Latina is more of like a, you know, like you can scream it, Hispanic, Latino, Latina. I don't know. It just sounds better.
- Speaker 1: [12:58](#) And studies show that the mosquito population is growing in the United States. How do you think this will affect race and race relations?
- Speaker 2: [13:10](#) You can tell.
- Speaker 2: [13:15](#) No, I feel like wherever you go, I have family, Oregon and you know that they're so close to people that are not from Venezuela but they're from like another other countries in Latin America. I felt like it. I don't know. There's some, some feeling of, of familiarity when you see people that are from a Latino country. I don't know if it's maybe the language, you know, being able to like talk to someone in Spanish or maybe it's because we're also aware of what's going on in other countries. You know, like when I go to Taco shop, literally I go there and talk to Spanish with all the people that work there and they're like, oh, are you, where are you from again? And then we'll like talk for like five minutes. It could very short conversation of like how everything's going up there and they're like, how's your family and stuff. So I don't know, it's just like a very kind of like feels like family, you know. But I think it's definitely going affect the country, you know, like the little. I don't know, it just, I don't know how I'm not gonna lie, but it's definitely gonna affect it somehow.

- Speaker 2: [14:23](#) I feel like so many people are coming here that, especially back in Venezuela, you know, like I know what's going on. I do, but I don't know exactly what's going on in other countries. But with that many people trying to leave, it's like it ends up being a place that you're like, oh my family is already there so I want to go and stay with them and like start a little business or whatever.
- Speaker 1: [14:46](#) So how do you maintain your Latino culture while being a student here?
- Speaker 2: [14:52](#) I think dog onto my friends from home and I've like I noticed and I talked to other people about it, like how I don't have that many friends here that I met here that are Latino and I know a lot of people that are Latino and I talked to them a lot but not really very intentionally, but I think that, you know, being in contact with my mom and like trying to make sure of what's going on. Like I listened to Latino Music and um, a lot of other people will like hang out and like go have a party at a house party. But I don't, I don't do that. I'm just too busy. If I make a pollyannas like I'm too busy and when I have free time I'm with my friends. So like there's a lot of guild sometime of like, hey, I'm like I don't make time to be an ob with other people that are from my country and that we have that connection.
- Speaker 2: [15:47](#) But at the same time it's like, I dunno, I don't want to base my whole life on that, you know? Um, but I think that I talk a lot about where I'm from to everyone and it's because I'm very proud and like I miss it a lot and I think that's the best way that I can, you know, remind myself of where I came from. It's like, just talking about it. I have a lot of friends who are like, oh yeah, I didn't know as much until I like started talking to you about how like maybe being someone from Latin America feels like, um, because I, I can't speak for everyone but they can at least see the way that I grew up and kind of like the different things that we do.
- Speaker 1: [16:35](#) But what are some challenges you face at the university in Oxford as a Latino student?
- Speaker 2: [16:44](#) I mean, I'm sure everyone says that, but like there's not that much diversity. You know, like, even in food, like you go here and it's like, Oh man, like you can only this much like you get to the grocery store and I cannot buy anything that's from Minnesota. I remember when I went to New York and like you would go to the Latino section and there was like food from everywhere. It's like you're here. And it's like, oh, the Taco ception, you know, and it's like, come on dude, like give me some other things. Um, so that's annoying. And of course like feeling like a little puppet sometimes like, oh, you know, like Rosa, she's like our Latino students. So we have to put her in

every single poster and like, I mean that's not necessarily something that makes me mad because I, I'm glad that at least um, I can represent a part of a culture or whatever.

- Speaker 2: [17:32](#) Like I'm glad that I can sort of help raise more awareness and stuff. But like that's a little frustrating sometimes. I don't know, like people know that it, it looks good, you know, to have a Latino student and they want to like kind of screen that. Like we, we have Latino students and is like, yeah, but like y'all don't really do that much for us, you know, like I, I, and I'm not trying to shit on anyone. Please don't think that I am. But like I haven't gotten that much help since I got here. Like I never got it. How are you doing? I never got so on going out of their way Toronto. See like if I was financially well if I was eating, you know, like, and being from a country that's literally falling apart, like I don't know, that's kind of that kind of sticks either. It doesn't make me mad because luckily I had my friends but like university wise I really haven't. My friends have been very nice and helpful but the university is Kinda like Thursday out and they were like the urine thing. Have Fun, you know? And I hope that that has changed. I think like, I know that uh, you can get a full scholarship now. Like deca has a full ride. I don't have a full ride, you know, like I still have to pay for tuition so that sucks.
- Speaker 1: [18:47](#) And has anyone ever asked about your race or ethnicity and how do you typically reply to those questions?
- Speaker 2: [18:55](#) Yeah, people ask all the time. Um, when I'm in the studio, there's a lot of people that have never been there before. They're taking their class for the first time and they're like, um, can I ask you a question? I hope you don't, like, it's kind of like offensive. How can I get mad? And I'm like, yeah, and I know it's where they're going to ask you another. They're going to be like, where are you from or where's your ats? And from. And I tell them I'm from Venezuela. That's the first thing I say, like, oh, well they never asked me like, what's your race or what's your ethnicity? They asked me like, where are you from [inaudible], I guess that people connect the. Where are you from? Do you know that race and ethnicity when it comes to like Latino people? And um, oh, I just always say Venezuela. It doesn't make me mad, but it's kind of like already know because I've had to respond so many times that it's like, I know they're going to ask me.
- Speaker 1: [19:51](#) And have you experienced any assumptions about your character because of your identity?
- Speaker 2: [20:00](#) I'm sure. I'm sure some people have made some assumptions, you know? Um, but I think even even myself, I'm like, oh, you know, like I'm Venezuelan and we're known as like the loud people. Like I'm very lot. I talk a lot and well that's not true. Like

I guess sometimes I take those stereotypical thoughts of people from my, not even, not even country but from my city because we're known. If you, if you google it, you're going to look like Medeco chose. They like cars a lot and they like scream and they like dancing and they like this. Like if you go on Wikipedia, you might actually find that because I think I looked it up the other day that we cuss a lot and I don't say that I'm like, ah, you know, like I grew up like this. That's why I'm like this. So, um, and of course the, I already said the, Oh, what part of Mexico is that? And it's like, dude, you know, Latino America is way bigger than that. Not because I'm brown doesn't mean I'm Mexican, you know?

Speaker 1: [21:08](#) Yeah, yeah. Um, and do you speak Spanish? How did you learn?

Speaker 2: [21:14](#) Yeah, I mean, I don't even know how I learned. I learned when I was a kid. It's like, oh, how do you learn English, you know?

Speaker 1: [21:21](#) And uh, was Spanish or English your first language Spanish. And um, how important is the ability to speak Spanish to Latino culture?

Speaker 2: [21:30](#) It's extremely important. You know, like if you have. Actually, I have a couple, I know a couple people that they moved to New York and then they had kids and their kids learn Spanish and they can speak Spanish perfectly and they could speak English perfectly and it's because, you know, like how, how are my kids, if I ever have any, how are they going to speak to my mom if they like don't know Spanish, you know, like there's a lot of things that get lost in translation and even even music even like anything, like jokes, like, like pop culture, like, like shows on TV novella as like how, how, how sitting on important language is so important to understand each other. Um, so it's, it's really important to me. You know, that if I'm with someone that speaks Spanish, I speak Spanish and I'm not like, like sometimes me, I'm Ingrid, my friend Ingrid, we talk and it's like we, we talk in spanglish because some things are easier to say in English because we've already said them in English before.

Speaker 2: [22:37](#) But like, I don't want to not, I don't want to sit in front of someone that I've spoke Spanish my entire life and speak in English, you know, I don't know it and it's very nostalgic, you know, like I don't speak in Spanish to my friends, didn't know how to speak English because that's just gonna make it harder because I have to like Kinda like have a little, have a little more patience and trying to not correct them all the time. So I always speak English with the people that know how to speak English unless they are like, can I get some help with the Spanish? But I don't know, it's, it's, it's truly important, like if you're, if you're a Latino kid and live in another country and don't know Spanish,

then I mean, it's sad, but it's true. You're not, you're not going to grow up with the same immerse in the community as she could. But yeah, that's, that's what I think. It sucks. But I mean that's, that's what I think.

Speaker 1: [23:34](#) Okay. And how does the university and the community catered to the Latino population?

Speaker 2: [23:41](#) Um,

Speaker 2: [23:44](#) I don't, I, I don't really know. I mean I know the, the other students from the Latin American Center organization, they like do a lot in party, but besides that I think that's the only thing that I ever see that's, that's big and that's for everyone and, and that's Latino, you know, besides the, of course like Mexican restaurants and stuff like that or like, no actually pretty a lot of Latino people work in there but I still don't think that it's really being catered. I know there's been like a couple activities like um, I would say this like panel of people that were Latino and they wanted to talk about it and they had some people that were raised in a Latino home but in the United States and they had some other international students. But like those are things that only journalists, journalism majors go do so they can write a story or like someone that's like very extremely interested goes to or like someone that feels like they have to go to support their friend, you know, like I don't feel like there's a lot of efforts into trying to.

Speaker 3: [25:01](#) I Dunno,

Speaker 2: [25:04](#) make it a more culturally aware campus try with how to tardy holidays like we invite everyone to, but that's such a small thing, you know, like, and, and it's sweet and it's nice and I appreciate it but I don't feel like you can't, you can make people

Speaker 2: [25:26](#) like no more things that they don't want to learn of and I think that there's a lack of interest in trying to understand because it's so easy to stick with what you know. And I feel like here it's like like, oh, you're white or you're black or you're like, you know, and everything else just kinda like falls into third place. You know? It's kind of like overlooked. Like even like, I don't like Asians, like nobody ever likes says, Oh yeah, that's have a nation party. Like I don't know. And I, I'm just talking right now, but I do feel like everyone that's not, that doesn't fit into black and white. It falls in that category of like other. How does the university have the community?

Speaker 3: [26:23](#) I mean, it can, it can be anything, you know, like

- Speaker 2: [26:28](#) I just don't, I, it may not even be like the university's fault. It's just like there's so little, there's such a little amount of people. It, even in class when you go to class that you kind of do feel like you're the only one sometimes. Um, and I don't, I don't know if that's the university's fault. I think it's just the lack of people being interested in going to Mississippi for school when they have like this type of background. Um, but another given more financial aid and you know, that attracts people to come to college because like if I'm getting a full right, why wouldn't I? I'm so, I guess they're like trying hard on that. But even like, like faculty, like I don't see that much faculty that's Latino, you know, like, and the art department. Oh God, I hate to do this, but like they don't have, they don't have like a, a Netzero, a mesoamerican.
- Speaker 2: [27:26](#) Um, or like Latin American art. They have a lady that this Asian art. But I mean, that would suck if they didn't because Asian art, it's like very important, but you know, so it's that American art, it's like we don't have a single teacher that can sit there and talk to me about like our history in, um, I dunno like Mexico, Argentina, they probably can't but like to a limited extent. And I'm sure, I'm sure it's like that in other departments I have met, like do other professors, but they were, um, they were like Spanish teachers. It's like, I mean, that makes a little more sense, but I don't know, I guess there's not a lot of people like in a higher position at the university that I can, I can like pinpoint as like, oh, you know, like they're Latino, you know, and there may be. And I'm just like not thinking well
- Speaker 1: [28:23](#) right now, how do you view race in the US? In the south and here in Oxford?
- Speaker 2: [28:31](#) Um, I guess I don't understand that question. It looks like super broad.
- Speaker 1: [28:38](#) Yeah, it is. It's very open ended. So it really is. No, none of this is any right or wrong answer, but had just written. That's really, how do you see race and United States here in the south. So right here, not expert.
- Speaker 2: [28:56](#) It's weird because people do talk about Mississippi kind of like you should be scared of going to Mississippi when you're like, like brown or Latino. It's like I have friends who are like, oh, it must be hard. And I'm like, I mean yeah it is, but I've never like, I, I don't think I've ever been denied services because I'm Latino, you know? And, and I don't know if it's because it's Oxford and it's like the most deceptive little town in Mississippi. So like you know, there's a lot of gay people that are openly gay and they live here and they like literally like hang out here and have these parties and stuff like that and like inclusive and stuff like that.

Like, and, and that, that is so cool and that makes me think of [inaudible] kind of like we had said people. But at the same time it's like you can tell that there's people that just don't give a shit and like think of you as less.

Speaker 2: [29:59](#) But I think that in, in comparison to Mississippi as a whole, like alters very accepted. Um, and, and maybe because we're so close to like, um, the were in the North Mississippi do, so I don't know if that, like maybe memphis has a big population of like other races because it's such a big city. I don't know what it is, but like I feel like answer is way more accepted than people would imagine a town in Mississippi would be. And, and the US in general, like I just feel like there's always a lot of kind of like people are scared to talk about it. Like even now I'm scared to talk about it sometimes because I don't want to offend anyone. You know? And, and it's like, it's not like, oh, you know, like I hope you don't get offended because I asked you where you're from.

Speaker 2: [30:50](#) It's like, no, I mean you should ask me where I'm from. Like, because I'm clearly not from here. You know, like the, like you can tell, um, but at the same time it's like I would, I would get mad at people did that all the time. So it's like, it's so weird because I never had to experience people think of me as an outsider until I came here and now it's like I don't even know how to react to what people say sometimes. And, and it's because you're different. People know you're different. People ask you why you're different or how you're different, you know.

Speaker 3: [31:26](#) But

Speaker 2: [31:27](#) I never felt that until now. And I don't know if it's because I'm in Mississippi or if it's because I'm in the US because when I go to New York, when I go to anywhere in the country, not anywhere but like New York, that's a place that I've been to the most. People don't ask me where I'm from, you know, like they just don't care because it's such a big city, you know, like who cares where you're from and the idea of race. Well I hope that people understand that there's a lot of countries that are a part of Latino Medica and it's not just like Mexico, you know,

Speaker 3: [32:05](#) um,

Speaker 2: [32:07](#) I think that having more Latino people here, my actually help that, like Kinda like raise awareness on the fact that people just like don't really understand what Latino is.

Speaker 3: [32:22](#) Um, I dunno,

Speaker 2:

[32:26](#)

that's Kinda hard to think of because it's such like a hypothetical question, you know, but um, no, I just hope that it raises a little more awareness and people are less like prompt to make those assumptions of, you know, you're Latino. That means that you do this. It's like I have a lot of friends that didn't even like Latino music. They listened to heavy metal when we were in high school. So. And are there any other points that you would like to discuss now? I think that's good. Well that's it.