



Title: Pam Morales Interview

Interviewee: Pam Morales

Interviewer: Ashlyn Merritt

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Spanish Summary of Interview: Esta entrevista con Pam Morales se centra en su experiencia como latina viviendo en Carolina del Norte. Ella nació y creció en Wilmington con sus padres y dos hermanas y un hermano. Ella describe cómo su identidad afecta su vida y cómo navega la cultura, identidad y herencia como una latina en Carolina del Norte.

English Summary of Interview: This interview with Pam Morales is centered on her experience as a Latina living in North Carolina. She was born and grew up in Wilmington with her parents, two sisters, and one brother. She describes how her identity affects her life and how she navigates culture, identity, and heritage as a Latina in North Carolina.

Transcript

Ashlyn: Okay. Hi, my name is Ashlyn Merritt and I am a junior at UNCW and I am a part of Professor Boomershines' Spanish 490 class. And today I am interviewing Pam Morales and I'm going to have her introduce herself.

Pam: Hi. Yes, I'm Pam Morales, I'm from Wilmington, North Carolina. I'm a junior at UNC Chapel Hill, but I've grown up at Wilmington my whole life.

Ashlyn: Yeah. Okay, cool. So a big part of this interview is you're from the Latino community, which is awesome. So I would love to hear a little bit more about, like, your family and your heritage. Like your background. If you want to tell me a little bit more about that.

Pam: Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, my family, they're all Mexican. They grew up or my mom grew up in Tabasco, Mexico. And then my dad is from Mexico City from Mexico. And then my two older siblings are also from Mexico. I also Mexico City. But then they came. My sisters came at like 12 or 13 to the United States, and then my parents came like in their 20s. And then from there I guess my brother and I were born in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Ashlyn: Yeah. Okay, cool. So were your parents. Did they immigrate first and then they brought their or your sisters along with them? Okay.

Pam: Yeah. So first.

Pam: My I think my parents came first. So my mom came I think by herself, actually I think, yeah, she came first. I forgot, like, what, year or whatever, but Yeah. And then met my dad through taking English classes at Cape Fear, I think.

Ashlyn: Oh, that's so cool.

Pam: And then from there, then my sisters came, like, later on.

Ashlyn: Yeah. That's so cool. So, do you know the reason behind why your parents came to the US?

Pam: Yeah. I'm not too sure. Like, full in detail, but I think they just like, wanted a just a better like Lifestyle. I think my dad had a cousin who lived here in Wilmington. So then he came over. And then my mom I think I think she also had a family member as well, but I think she just. Like, wanted to leave Mexico.

Ashlyn: Yeah. Okay. That's awesome. So it's. You have two older sisters, and then Johnny, your brother, and then are you the youngest, or do you have another?

Pam: Okay, cool. I am okay.

Pam: And my second oldest sister, though she has a kid, and so I guess I'm an aunt.

Pam: Oh.

Ashlyn: I'm sure that's been fun. So when you're, like, speaking in your household currently, do you speak only Spanish? Do you speak a little bit of both?

Pam: It's actually funny.

Pam: I speak like a different language to each of my siblings. So, like, my oldest sister, I only speak Spanish.

Pam: Yeah.

Pam: Well, because they're in their 30s, so I guess they're like more I don't know.

Pam: Yes.

Pam: I don't know, I just speak Spanish only to her. And then my second oldest she's like, good with both languages. My my oldest, she's, like, kind of iffy on English, but, like, she's still, like, understands. But my second oldest, Anna she's, like, bilingual in both. I.

Pam: Speak a.

Pam: Mix of both. And then my brother, I speak only English to him.

Pam: Yeah.

Pam: Even though, like, we both know that. Like we know.

Pam: Spanish. Yeah.

Ashlyn: So what was it like growing up in Wilmington and being part of the Hispanic community? How did that kind of affect your experience growing up as a kid?

Pam: Yeah.

Pam: I mean like, I feel like in the area I grew up in well, I grew up like, in a, like a trailer park, so, like, it was like so many like other Latinos and Latinas there and then. So like I guess we had that community, but like, like schools and stuff. I guess like we were mainly on the side that it was like, I guess white dominated. So like, I didn't really have like as many other, like, Spanish speaking friends other than, like, like very few.

Ashlyn: Yeah. Yeah. I'm sure that was that was hard. But did you feel like, like growing up when you were going through school, were you learning like, a lot of English? So do you feel like you could understand the people that you were like in school with, or do you feel like the language barrier played a part in like your learning experience as well?

Pam: Yeah, I think because like, I think I don't know, I don't know about other people, but I think because I spoke English and Spanish in my household. So like I was able to pick up on the language easier. So I didn't really have like a barrier speaking with other people at my school. But I did definitely had some friends who were in the, I think ESL program.

Pam: Yeah.

Pam: So I guess that was hard for others.

Ashlyn: Yeah. That's cool. It's interesting getting to hear a lot about, like the Hispanic community in our area just because when I came to school. I'm not from Wilmington. So it's definitely really cool getting to hear about that. I would love to hear more about, like, growing up, what was like one of your favorite things to do or what were you like involved in throughout school?

Pam: Yeah. I mean, do you like, what age? Like middle school.

Ashlyn: You can do anywhere from elementary, middle high school. You kind of go through all of it.

Pam: Yeah, yeah.

Pam: I mean, I can start from, like I guess young yeah. I mean, elementary school, I would like, hang out with all my neighborhood school friends. We would all, like, play like freeze tag or, like, ride bikes and like, I don't know, just play outside until, like, the lights came on and, like, that's how you knew you had to, like, head home. Otherwise, my mom would be like, where are you? Like, you shouldn't be out too late. So But then middle school I was in band. I had like.

Ashlyn: That's cool.

Pam: Some friends in there. I don't know. And then what? What else was I involved? Oh I did early college. High school. I was, like, small. I don't know if you heard Isaac Bear. They like. Yeah, they like work through UNCW.

Ashlyn: Okay.

Pam: So I, I had to take a, I guess I could have placed out of Spanish, but I still took it, I guess, just to take so that was like, I guess easy for me because I was.

Pam: Like.

Pam: All right, should I be taking this?

Pam: But yeah.

Pam: But I still, like, was involved in like, I know that UNCW has a, like a Centro Hispano.

Pam: Yeah. Yeah.

Pam: So I think that was cool. I had a like I remember I took a like upper level course at UNCW. And like I had to like go there to pick up a book.

Pam: So yeah.

Ashlyn: Yeah. That's cool. What was your experience taking Spanish classes at UNCW like being a native speaker and spoke in your household? Was there like stuff that like when you were in class like, whoa, that's different than what I've been taught or oh, this is interesting. I'd love to hear more about that.

Pam: Yeah. So the class I took was like for like, bilinguals.

Ashlyn: Okay.

Pam: Like, I think as I like, grew up older. Because at first I would speak Spanish a lot, but like, I guess like, all my friends, like, mostly spoke English, so I like low key was starting to lose my Spanish a little and like, I don't know, I guess I like different cultures and stuff. Like, I was like like being plugged into, like more like traditional, like American, but

Ashlyn: Yeah.

Pam: Yeah. I mean, it was like more like like like finding, like your identity and like, we read this book, Look, I forgot like the name of it, but I don't know. It was just really cool to see how, like, there were other students in the class that I could relate to and that we were all like on the same boat on like, like having like, I don't know, I don't know how to describe it like two different sides.

Ashlyn: Like, yeah.

Pam: I don't know if you're fully like because especially we were born here and our family wasn't, we're like, alright, are we too, are we too I guess Hispanic for like others or are we too like, you know what I mean? Yeah, I guess it was cool to see how other people were like on the same boat.

Pam: Yeah.

Ashlyn: That's awesome. Do you feel like since you've gotten to Chapel Hill that you're able to get to a place where you feel like you can kind of embrace both of, like both sides of your culture and kind of. What has that experience been like for you since coming to college?

Pam: Yeah so I coming here, like, I guess it was a little culture shock that like, there's like a small, like population of like other Hispanics, but I mean, I joined this one club. I'm sure you saw me, like, post it a lot in my stories. Yeah, but the Association of Latino Professionals for America.

Ashlyn: Yeah.

Pam: Which is just it's a long word, but it's just this one club it's just this professional development club because I'm a business major and there's not really I guess people of color in the business major as much.

Ashlyn: Yeah.

Pam: So it was really cool to, like, meet other people as well in that same boat. And, like, I don't know, the community here. Like, everyone's like, so like like everyone knows everyone.

Pam: If you, mean, like, you say a name, you're like, oh, yeah, I know who. So that's

Ashlyn: Awesome. So you're a part of this club. What does like, do you guys meet or do you put on events? Do you go to like seminars? Like what does that look like?

Pam: Yeah.

Pam: We so I'm the social chair. So I host.

Pam: Like awesome.

Pam: Different social events. We do collabs with other organizations other companies as well. Other Hispanic organizations on campus. Like, we had this one event called La Pulga, which is flea market in English. Yeah. But like all the other Hispanic organizations, like they were able to sell food and stuff. So like, we sold Fresas con Crema, which is like strawberry and cream and like, it was really it was in the pit, like, so like everyone on campus could come and get some food.

Ashlyn: Oh, yeah. That's so cool. I love, I love hearing about, like, how you still get to be a part of, like, be a student at UNC and you get to be a part of the Latinos Professional Alliance, and you kind of bring both of those together because I, I can see how it would be hard to kind of figure out how to still incorporate both in the struggle for that. So thanks for telling me a little bit about that. But I would love to chat about, like your business major and kind of what your heart behind that is. And what you'd like to do with that.

Pam: Yeah. So I'm a business major, but mostly like marketing related. And then I also have an entrepreneurship minor. So I guess that kind of goes hand in hand. That's awesome. But I think what inspired it is that like my family, they used to have a Mexican restaurant and they're always like, like very driven. They love like side hustles and things like my family, they used to have a

like a taxi little service. And we would like give rides to people or people we knew or like, even still, if you lock your car, like, we will open it up for you or my sister. She does like dog grooming and like, just like things like that. So I've always been inspired, like something businessy. But I like, wasn't sure what, and I don't know, I feel like I've always loved, like, creative stuff as well. So I guess that's where, like, the marketing part comes into play. But, Like future wise. I don't know, like exactly what I want to do, but like, definitely like helping people somehow or like I don't know, trying to, like, make people feel seen while also like I guess helping the brand or company. Yeah. And what you're doing.

Ashlyn: Yeah. That's so cool. I love getting to hear about your family. I didn't know they had a Mexican restaurant. That is so cool.

Pam: They used to have.

Pam: It on on Kerr Kerr Avenue. Yeah. And then we're going to open another one. But then I guess that never happened.

Ashlyn: Yeah. Is there Mexican restaurant still open or is it.

Pam: No it it used to be like pretty popular like back in the, like like two thousand tens ish. Okay. Like, I remember there was like an article about it too.

Ashlyn: Yeah. That's cool. So did you grow up, like, with your parents being pretty involved in that for a good bit of your childhood?

Pam: Yes.

Ashlyn: Yeah. So what were like some of their, like struggles that they faced with owning a restaurant in Wilmington, I feel like that's got to be a lot of hard work. But from what it sounds like, they're really hard working people.

Pam: Yeah, I mean, there's like, like customers wise, like making sure everyone's happy. Yeah. They used to bring in, like, bands to like, come and play like also like with that, like making sure like, there's no like, like issues or fights and things like that. Because it would like, be like late at night. But like, obviously like making sure like people like, I like customer service, like making sure people love the food and not like, I guess, like dealing with, like, complaints and stuff. Just. Yeah. Because there's people who, like, come and like hate on food and it's like, yeah.

Ashlyn: Yeah, yeah. That's cool, that's cool. I love that. I love getting to hear about like, your heart behind, like, what you want to do. Would you ever consider, like, working closely with the Latino or Hispanic community wherever you end up. Like, what would that look like for you, or still kind of trying to figure that out?

Pam: Yeah, no, definitely I'm open to anything. The club that I mentioned earlier, Alpfa it's a national organization and they.

Ashlyn: Yeah.

Pam: Like I don't know, they work with different companies like Bank of America. They work with I can't think of companies, but they were like, actual, like big companies, and then, like, I don't know. So I feel like that's cool. That, like, like even being a part of that club, like, you have so many resources and things like that that I wouldn't have known before if I didn't join it.

Ashlyn: Yeah. For sure. That's so cool. So, like shifting a little bit towards, like, your community at school, do you feel like you have a good community? That's like a little bit of, like, everything that you love. So, like, you have your alliance with Latinos Club and then what else are you involved in? That's in something you're really passionate about?

Pam: I'm also involved in, like, the, like, church ministry that I'm in here. And. Yeah, I think that's pretty good. There's also this thing called the study center at UNC.

Ashlyn: I've heard about that, yeah.

Pam: Yeah. So, like different, like it's not just like one, like church, I guess. Like, it's like. Yeah. So I guess, like, there's a variety in there, and then what else am I a part of? I don't know, I guess just like my classes. Yeah, like, I guess, well, some of them are are, like, mainly like, just like frat guys. Yeah, there's, there's been actually, like a quite a bit of international students in my classes, which has been pretty cool.

Ashlyn: Yeah. Oh, that's so cool. I love. We've had a ton of like, international students. I feel like that have been in a lot of our classes as well. I have a girl in one of my classes who's from Spain this semester. So it was really sweet. So getting to know her know her has been fun. And it's we're in a Spanish class, so when she's speaking I'm like, whoa, this is so cool. So yeah, that's awesome. Oh, I had a follow up question with that. What was it? Oh, I forgot, you're good. Oh. Oh, okay. I remember what it was going to be, but we were talking earlier a little bit about, like, your childhood and, like, growing up and like, when you were going to play outside to, like, the lights came on. That made me think, like I had a very similar experience, like in childhood. So, like, it's cool. Like even if we like, grew up in different like circumstances or like even across like cultures, like even just like growing up as a kid we still get to, like, go and play with our friends on the street and, like, just have a good time. And I think that's just such a cool, like, experience to be able to compare. So another question that I was going to kind of ask about is like, did you ever feel like I may have to restate this question, but like, did you ever feel like at any point when you were like growing up, do you feel like your age kind of like affected your experience? So like, for example, like your parents did not grow up here. They were from Mexico. And so coming here for them, like they had to learn English at an older age. Do you ever feel like, kind of being, like, growing up here, did that help did like how did that kind of affect your experience?

Pam: No, definitely. Like the first thing that came to mind was like when I was like, I don't know, like four or something, like, I would like, have to like, translate like these, like weird, complicated documents that I didn't even know, like what they meant or like, like reminding them of like bills and stuff. I'm like, alright, you gotta do this and call this number and then do this, or they would like at the doctors, they would like make me like talk to them. But like, I guess me, like I like was the most shy person ever. So like it was so hard for me.

Ashlyn: Yeah.

Pam: Like, I had to, like, I don't know, I guess, like, be I guess, like, more independent as, like a young person.

Ashlyn: Yeah. That's not something a lot of four year olds typically have to do is, like, help their parents with pretty important documents. So I know that must have been, like, extremely hard for you. You're probably just like, whoa.

Pam: Yeah.

Ashlyn: So. But yeah. Yeah. That's cool. Oh, I was going somewhere with that one, too. Oh, what was it? Oh, yeah. So we've been talking a lot in class about, like like kids having to translate for their parents, like, whether it's, like, at the doctor or with, like, important and or important documents. Do you have any suggestions or like, things that you think would be helpful for people to know when it comes to, like this kind of situation or like suggestions of how to like fix it if there is a way to fix it. Does that make sense. Yeah.

Pam: Oh like suggestions for who for just.

Ashlyn: Like just so like it takes the burden off of kids not having to translate further for their parents.

Pam: I guess like if there was like already like people who were like assigned to like interpret these people like, like I know like when you call it's like click here if you need a Spanish interpreter to interpreter. But like if you like go in person to places like already having someone there I guess, instead of like having to rely on your kid or something.

Ashlyn: Yeah. Yeah. That's cool. We've been learning about a lot of different ways to, like, see how to fix that and make sure that's not like the case, just because that puts a lot on the kid, and it just leaves a lot of room for miscommunication and just making sure all voices are heard. Especially the people who, like, are receiving the service just because they're the one that's like we're doing a disservice by them if they don't understand what's what's happening. So I always like to ask just to kind of hear people's minds. But I would love to just kind of finish up one last question. What would you like tell somebody that is like looking that lives in America. That is not from there, from here. So they're born here. American native. That is like looking to get immersed in the Hispanic and Latino community. What's like one piece of advice that you would give them?

Pam: Probably just to be like, open minded and just like, like, I guess, like, be like, like fully trying to, like, understand where people are coming from and like the history behind things rather than, like jumping to conclusions and. Yeah things like that.

Ashlyn: Yeah, yeah. I love that it's been, like, super cool the last couple of years. Like taking Spanish and the more like getting to know the culture. It's like, okay, like, there's so much of me that I'm like, I'm not like, I'm just trying to learn from the people around me, from experience. And so it's been really sweet, and I've been just super excited about this opportunity to interview

you. Just because I feel like I've known you for like 3 or 4 years now, but I don't really know much about your background. So I'm so excited that we got to sit down and do this.

Pam: Yeah. No, I'm glad to. Thank you so much for like, like, interviewing me and like, I, I see me these questions like, sometimes like, I don't even know until like I'm being asked. I'm like, oh, that's that's a good point.

Ashlyn: Yeah. Awesome. Well thank you so much, Pam, I appreciate it. This was such a good conversation, and I'm excited to see how many people get to listen to it and how many lives are affected just by the way that you've lived your life and the things that you've gone through. So I really appreciate that.

Pam: Yeah. No. Thank you so much, Ashlyn.

Ashlyn: Yeah. You're welcome.