**Interview #1**

**Date: April 24, 2013**

**Time: 3:00pm**

**Location: LALACS House**

**Paola:** Alright, so let’s start. So first I’m gonna ask you some questions about your childhood, your family. Ummm…so what country are you originally from?

***JH:***  I am from [Latin America]. Uh, from you know a city that is called --------.

**Paola:** Cool. And has your family always lived in [your home country?]

***JH:***  My family lives in [Latin America]. I have a couple of members of my family that are here, but my mom and my brother are in [in my home country]. They have never been to this country.

**Paola:** Oh, wow!

***JH:***  Yeah.

**Paola:** Not yet! Haha

***JH:***  I don’t think they are going to, but yes.

**Paola:** And what memories do you have from home? Like as a child, what did you do for fun? You said you have a brother, so what did you do?

***JH:***  Well, my childhood was pretty happy. I have just one brother but we have… I have 14 cousins, which was 12 girls…I mean 12 boys and 2 girls.

**Paola:** Wow!

***JH:***  And you know. My childhood, until I was 12, I think, everything was so happy. We used to do everything together and you know every week we went away to go to the farm and just ride the horses. So yeah, the childhood was pretty perfect.

**Paola** : Do you still keep in touch with some of those cousins?

***JH:***  Uhhh no, you know. Cuz when I was 12 my grandparents got killed and then you know the family just split up. Even though a lot of them live here in the States, we barely talk to each other, so…

**Paola** : Family is complicated. Haha

***JH:***  Yes, it is! Haha

**Paola:** Ummm… so… what did your parents do in [your home country]?

***JH:***  My mom, she’s a stay-at-home mom. She’s always been. And uhh my dad, used to work in my grandfather’s factory. But after, you know, he hasn’t worked for like 22 years. You know. He buys houses and he fixes them, but not really like… He got his pension like 20 years ago.

**Paola** : Oh, cool. Lots of free time. Haha

***JH:***  Yes.

**Paola:** Okay, so moving on to coming to the U.S… ummm. How old were you when you left for the U.S. Or what year did you leave?

***JH:***  I came here when I was 21. Uhhh… so you know, I was 21. It was 2001… and the funniest thing is that I never thought that I wanted to come to the states. So, you know, one day I got bored… and my family. And, you know, my uncles was coming to the States and I didn’t have a visa or anything. I got this idea that I wanted to come with him. And it was quite and experience to come because, you know, we had to go through many different countries to get here. Uhhh, it was supposed to be easy, but it took a few days. A few days to get here and we went through El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico THEN… I arrived in Florida. So you know, no English, no money, my uncle who came with me, he got caught, so I was lost in the middle of…

Paola: by yourself!

***JH:***  Yeah. I didn’t know how to use the phone, you know, nothing. So it was pretty messy but you know, I came here and I arrived to [California] a few days later. And that’s it. That’s my story of coming to the States.

Paola: Oh my Gosh! Did you know anyone is like Florida or California?

***JH:***  I had, luckily, I had the number for one of the guys that was coming with us. And I’m like, okay, I will call you one day. So I called the sister, and I’m like “Listen, he didn’t make it here, but can you help me out?” She picked me up and then we went to, you know, I have family in California. I have two uncles there so… I arrived to California.

Paola: Oh my Gosh! It’s such a crazy story! Hahaha

***JH:***  It is what it is..

Paola: So when you left, what was your impression of the U.S.? You said you didn’t want to come here

***JH:***  I never thought about it, but… Every idea I had about the states..It was about people with blue eyes, blond hair, they didn’t speak Spanish and they had a lot of money. You know because that’s what you see in the movies so… It was hard just to…I didn’t know that there were Mexicans… or anything. Call it ignorance, call it whatever you want but I just didn’t know anything about it. You know I thought that you would be rich just coming here and working for a month and then I would be full of money and then I would go back. And then when I arrived to California, I was like “Oh my God”. It was like Mexico. So I’m like “Oh my God”… I was very disappointed. It was difficult to adjust.. it was easier in a way because everyone spoke Spanish and I didn’t speak English so…

Paola: so that was helpful?

***JH:***  Yeah. But also that makes you be so conformist about what you do because you don’t need to learn anything. So, for 5 years I stayed there. I’ve been here 12 years, and for the first 5 ½ I didn’t speak English whatsoever. So that was my impression of the United States, what you see on TV.

Paola: And when you decided to leave, did people tell you “Oh don’t go here”. Did they give you any advice or did they see you differently?

***JH:***  When I decided to come here? No, everybody was very excited, because you just think about the American Dream. I mean, in my case it wasn’t about living in poverty or anything like that. Some people were like “Why are you leaving? You have everything, you have the perfect life, you have a perfect career, you have the perfect job”. I was like “I’m bored, I want to experience something new. But some of my other friends, they were like “You know, it will be really cool. That will be a great experience and you will be speaking English in a month. And you’ll have a lot of money”. I had made up my mind and I just left. So…yeah, but it was the two sides of why to go. And I was 21 and I was bored, and when you have everything you just take it for granted. And I just, I just didn’t know better.

Paola: So I guess going back a little bit, So you were 21 when you came here? Did you like have plans to go to college or were you in college?

***JH:***  In [my country]?

Paola: Mhmm. In [your home country].

***JH:***  Yeah, of course. In [my country], you know, education is not a big thing in many families in [my country]. Mine was one of them. I finished high school and my parents never went to my graduation. I didn’t go to my graduation because I didn’t want to show up by myself. And they’re like “I’ll give you some money and just go have fun. And the gifts. But I never went to the ceremony. And then because it was so easy, I started like 5 different careers. I started a lot of them. My dad knew people so, he would just make a call and I would be in. So I would get bored and start over. But then I did the one that I really, really liked.

Paola: Which one was that?

***JH:***  It’s physical education. So yeah, that one was the one I finished and it was part of my job. I was a life guard and I was a swimming instructor. So it was a combination of everything that I learned. So I had a pretty perfect life. I was somebody, everybody knew me. Everybody respected me. And then, you come here and everything is different. But you’re nothing. You’re nobody. You have to start from scratch. Nothing that you studied there comes here…and it totally sucks.

Paola: So, why did you choose the U.S. and not somewhere else? Like Canada or…

***JH:***  Because, I have family here. So, it’s easier to just get to a place where you know somebody. Cuz my life was so perfect, let’s call it. I never thought about leaving [my home country]. It was an impulse and because I have the, I don’t know, guts I think I just decided that it was gonna be a new experience. But I didn’t know anything about being illegal in the states or I didn’t know anything about racism, I didn’t know anything about stereotyping. I didn’t know any of those things. Because if I knew, why would you go to a place that they’re going to treat you like nothing. That’s part of the thing. The media, and the way they portray the U.S. had a lot to do with these dreams I had. I never had this dream of just getting married with a white guy and live in a mansion. I didn’t have those dreams, but I just thought it was going to be easier. I never thought they would look at immigrants the way they do. So, and they would mistreat them like that. It’s not just treatment but kind of jobs they get. It’s a lot. It’s the pay, it’s everything. It’s psychological. You know the things they just go through and it has to do with not belonging. And at the same time, just trying to become part of the culture and fit in and it just doesn’t make sense, but you have to do it. Yeah, but that’s why I picked the U.S. because I knew people here.

…12:18 Cat jumped on the table.

Paola: So you kind of already talked about travelling through all these different countries to get here. But could you elaborate. Or like what transportation did you take.

***JH:***  Okay, the plan was we were going to leave from [my country] to El Salvador and from el Salvador to Guatemala, but everything was by plane. Here was the plan. El Salvador, Guatemala. In Guatemala we would get visas, Mexico. And it would take 2 or 3 days just to do all of that. But then…we got from [my country] to El Salvador and it was pretty easy to get in just because it was the earthquakes at that time. So we got there and the person who was supposed to get the visas in Guatemala, he was somewhere in Mexico. So we didn’t even know what was going on and they kept calling him and he didn’t answer. So we ended up staying in El Salvador for 2 days. And we went through two big earthquakes and it was in this hotel that… we just thought we were going to die there… it just looked like it was falling down.

Paola: You were there when the earthquakes happened?

***JH:***  Yeah.

Paola: Wow! That’s really scary.

***JH:***  Yeah, so it started really bad. He didn’t answer the phone. At the end, he’s like “You guys have to come to Guatemala”. I’m like “Where is the plane?” No plane. So we had to just wait a few days there and just come to this…I don’t know what happened… or a connection… something happened… but we ended up riding a bus from El Salvador to Guatemala.

Paola: How long was that [the ride]?

***JH:***  It was a couple of hours, but… That’s not the worst part. At one point, we stopped and it was 4 of us: the coyote, my uncle, another guy and myself. And we stopped and it was so hot. We were like by the mountains, so we stopped. And all of the sudden they say you have to come here. And they start taking the luggage out and they open this hole... they took the screws off and we were inside and they screwed us back in…and we were next to the engine.

Paola: Oh, my goodness!

***JH:***  For like 3 hours, while we crossed the borderline. It was so hot. And at one point, they stopped the bus. And they’re like “everybody get out”. It was the immigration I guess and they started… you could just hear them looking and they took everything out…and they were looking for people and I’m like “don’t sneeze, don’t do anything”. It was a space like this table right here. You know it was really small and we were four people. We couldn’t move for the longest time. Even if [the bus] was stopped we could move just to change positions…it was horrible. It was really hot and we were freaking out. We’re like “we’re going to get caught, and what’s going to happen to us”. Were in the middle of the mountains, we don’t know anybody. But they let us go because they didn’t find anything. Cuz we were like…they took all the luggage out… but we weren’t there because we were in the engine! The screwed were put back on, so how are you going to know? So like an hour and a half after that…they stopped and then they were running and trying to get us out just to make sure we were breathing. Were like full of grease… it was horrible. Finally we went up in the bus, after they let us go to a gas station and just get cleaned up so we wouldn’t look so suspicious, and they gave us water; which was the best thing ever! Then we got to Guatemala and we went into this hotel that we thought was empty because it was pretty…it got a little sketchy. But we weren’t allowed to go outside, because…You know Guatemalans and [people from my country] we look very different. We dress different, we dress different, we talk different…and that can be suspicious. Because who’s going to go to Guatemala as a tourists?

Paola: Oh, okay.

***JH:***  So then, it was all of us in one little room.

Paola: All four of you? Or everyone?

***JH:***  No, just the four of us. But then, it was funny because when it was time to eat, we had supposedly…we paid upfront just because we were supposed to have any money there. But everything came extra. Everything was supposed to be included, but it wasn’t. So we went to have lunch downstairs…or whatever dinner. Bu then, it was amazing because there were people from all over the world in that hotel. People from China… like they were waiting the same connection. Not the same guy, but it was this place where they put them all. Like is immigration came there… it would get 500 people in one shot. It was scary...I was like “I’m not hungry. You know at this point, it was 5 days.

Paola: You had been travelling for 5 days already?

***JH:***  Yeah, so… it was…I don’t know. We didn’t know anything about this Guatemalan guy, where was he? They said that he was in Mexico and he got into some trouble there. It was… everything was very scary…we didn’t know anything. And sometimes he wouldn’t answer the phone. We spent, at that time it was $13,000. In [my country], the dollar is doubled…so it was $26,000 pesos. Which is…you can buy a house with that. just to give you an example of how different it is: My brother makes, in a month working full time, $180 (dollars).

Paola: In a month?

***JH:***  In a month. And he has two kids. So $180 dollars… he makes that now. We paid $13,000 dollars there… so it was a lot of money. But at that point, I was concerned about my uncles because he was borrowing money from everybody just to try to get here. My case was different; I didn’t have to worry so much. I’m like “if I go back, I don’t have to worry”.

Paola: But I mean, still, that’s a big investment.

***JH:***  I know, but I was spoiled. I was very spoiled. It was what it was. Part of it… my dad gave me a car when I was 14…so I sold the car. Then I was a couple of thousand short… but after I made up my mind he was like “Okay, I’ll give it to you”. Anyways, we went there and finally we met this guy.

Paola: The Guatemalan guy?

***JH:***  Yeah. So, we met him and it was very interesting. We went to take the photos and the next day we had the passports with the visa. And we had like a list of things that you have to learn about that person, in case [the authorities] would ask. It was a piece of paper with: what’s the name of the president of this year, and this year. Because we didn’t look like Guatemalans…So we had to know how many times they had been in the States…It was a lot of preparation and we were talking about…You know, I don’t even remember…Questzales? The money they use there…All of those things. We learned the national anthem…yeah, we were studying through all of that. Yeah, I still remember the name that I came with…

Paola: Do you really?

***JH:***  Yes!

Paola: Because you had to learn so much about her…

***JH:***  Yeah. So when we got to the airport, it was four of us. When it was time to just go inside the airport, the guys gets a call and says “Only two people can go”. I’m like “I’m with him [her uncle] so I have to go with him”. So he said “go to the window number whatever, and just to that one”. The would look at the papers…Because he had like a contact there. The other guy had to stay and later on we found out that they had to cross the desert. But, I’ll tell you why later. It’s a good story! hahahahahaThats going to be a good story for you. So then we got to Mexico. They kept calling my uncle at the airport…we could talk to each other and we had to wait in Mexico for 8 hours just to get on the next plane. And they kept calling his name [her uncle’s]…and I was talking to people from Guatemala to try to get the accent and use the *mande* and you know. So at the airport they kept calling my uncle “Erick Monmorensi” because that was the name, but I think he forgot that that was him. Then I went to look for him, they are calling you. They checked his papers…but they let him go on the plane again, which was really weird.

***JH:***  Then when we got to Florida, we were in immigration and I was going next to him. All of the sudden I didn’t see him anymore. At one point, I was like “Okay, I’m just going to breathe”. And this guy is like speaking to me in English. I was kind of responding…I was so spoiled I took English [in my country]…But I didn’t really speak anything. He said something about *tired*. And I’m like “yes…” and then he said “Well, welcome to the United States”. But then I went outside and didn’t see my uncle. I waited for two hours and I was like “Shoot, they are going to deport me if I stay there”. So I said, “Okay, I’ll get a taxi, but to where?” They told us that next to the airport there was going to be a local airport, right? Like ten miles from there. And there we were supposed to buy a ticket to California for like $300.

Paola: Okay.

***JH:***  That’s what they said. He said, “Oh don’t worry, everyone there speaks Spanish [In Florida]. There were like 30 taxis and I asked them “Do you speak Spanish”? Nobody.

Paola: Wow.

***JH:***  I didn’t know how to use the phone. I didn’t know where to look for my uncle. I didn’t know he got caught. Nothing. So, I ended up like taking a taxi to a gas station and this guy was trying, so nicely to explain to me how to use a phone card. I’m like “What is a phone card”. I needed to call California. I was shaking, I was ready to cry. So then I called my uncle in California. He was working and he never answered the phone and I’m leaving him all these messages like “I’m lost”. Then I found the number for my friend… not my friend the guy we were coming with. So I called his sister and we went to [her house]. And hours later my uncle called me there! Oh, because I was telling [the taxi driver] “Take me to this airport” and he said “oh, that’s going to cost you a lot of money” and I only had $500 with me. So then, I called American Airlines from that house where I went. Oh the taxi ride from the airport for that house cost me $85 plus tip. Which I didn’t know you had to leave tip…

Paola: Oh wow!

***JH:***  So now, I had only $400. So they called American Airlines and it was $1000 to California; one way. I didn’t have the money. Nothing. So then my uncle bought it and you have to check-in electronically, which I didn’t know what that was…and I thought I was going to get caught. It was horrible. This family took me to the airport and I’m like I don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t look Guatemalan. I’m freaking out. And they were checking the time. It was horrible. At that point, I didn’t have anything from [my country] because we had to burn the passports in Guatemala.

Paola: Your [country’s] passports?

***JH:***  Yeah. I got to California and like three days later, I found out that my uncle got caught. The visa they sold him was from a guy that was dead…like two years before. So after my uncle got caught, the whole organization went down. So that’s why the guys who were [in Mexico] had to cross the desert. One of them had problems with his feet and you know it was a lot of walking. He couldn’t go anymore and they told him to just want towards the street and immigration will take you.

Paola: And take you back?

***JH:***  You know, there are many things that you can do. Like political asylum; my uncle got that.

Paola: I see.

***JH:***  So that’s what I’m doing now. Because when you come to this country with papers that are not yours, or when you don’t have proof that you have entered the country, the process becomes more complicated. You start asking…we went to different lawyers asking for the best option. There is no option. Getting married doesn’t matter, because you still have to prove that you came.

Paola: Really?

***JH:***  Yes, so it’s messy. It was like many different options. And the chances were like…for the first 8 years…the chances were like 1 in 1000. So I thought why I would do that. But after [my daughter]was born, I decided that I was going for it, no matter what. Now I have my license, my social…but it took a long time. If those were the odds, why was I going to do that? So yeah, now I’m here.

Paola: That is an intense story! hahahaha

***JH:***  There you go! You want me to give you something juicy for your paper?

Paola: Yes, thank you! So being here and remembering that, how do you feel?

***JH:***  If I had to do it again, I would do it. I’m one of those people that has to experience things to understand them. I used to work in California. When I first got there I used to work in a clothing store… My friends [from my country]… they came with a visa and the tourist kind of thing…they didn’t understand. [I worked] on Mission Street so it was a Mexican town. So they would come…people who were like really stinky and really sweaty and they bought clothes and threw the other ones away. I didn’t understand at the beginning. But one day I asked this guy “Why do you have blisters”. It was summer, but summer in California is maybe 65 degrees, so it didn’t make sense. One of them told me the story: we just crossed the desert and they just dropped us off and we need something to not look suspicious. So everyone I saw a stinky one, I would go talk to them. They would me the stories. No one else wanted to help them. And you don’t understand those things because when you’re in those places, you’re on your own. You never know what’s going to happen… if you’re going to make it to the next level…you know never know.

Paola: Like what’s next?

***JH:***  No, because the only part that I’m like “Oh my god”. It was the part in the engine. Because I thought I was going to die from the heat exposure. I don’t know. But when I think about it, I just think it was stupid just because my uncle was married. I was under 16 and if they had just sent a letter, I could have gotten my papers...twice. Because I was so in love, I said “No, blah, blah, blah. I have a perfect life, why would I go there” They said “we’ll give you a car and an education”. I though, I have the same here [In my country]. So I didn’t use that. And I never asked for a visa. No, it just came out of the blue. You see this Hollywood actors and actresses, that’s how I relate it. You just do it just because. Then you’re like “Oh shit, what happened? What did I do?” But, it’s a lot of struggle. I wish the transition would have been easier. I wish I knew everything that happens. I swear, [my partner] still doesn’t believe me, but I never heard of the word *racism* in [my country]. Never. I didn’t even know! How are you supposed to know about those things? She [[my partner]] is like “How many black friends did you have?” And I didn’t have any…but it wants because I didn’t want them, it was because I wasn’t around them. But I never heard of it…Never. If I knew all of the background of what this country is like. I would never come here. I would just be doing my same crazy thing in [my country] and I would be very happy. And I would have my plans all set up for everything I wanted to do.

Paola: Oh my gosh! Thank you so much for that! So, I don’t know, that’s…

***JH:***  It threw your interview off! Hahaha You had these questions…hahaha

Paola: No, no, no. Perfect! Love it! So the next question is: How do you think your life would have been different if you stayed? You said you had a plan and everything…

***JH:***  Everything would be…easy. Very easy. Even though my family didn’t believe in education… and to tell you the truth I didn’t believe I needed it. I just did it because it was cool to have a degree. Everything I did was taking little certification things. First I was a swimmer. I used to swim and then play water polo. Then I played 6 years with the National Team [of my country]. Water Polo. So at one point after I was allowed to drink, you start getting a little distracted- I wanted to change. And then it’s a lot of pressure; you train three times a day, you don’t see your friends, they control what you eat, they measure your body fat every day, if you’re sick: put some ice, get in the pool, get out, put some ice and you’ll be fine. I got tired… the travelling was good, but I think at some point it wasn’t worth all the sacrifice. So I decided to do a certification as a swimming instructor. So I started teaching kids…and I loved it. And then for babies and I took my nephew to my classes. I have a photo, that if I decide that I want to use those photos. He was three months old and I used to do my things with him. Most of the instructors were doing it with dolls, but I had my nephew. So [my daughter] started the same.

Paola: Oh, so you taught her

***JH:***  Oh yeah. She will be like swallowing water, but you just go for it. So then I decided to teach babies, and then adults. Then I got so into it that I did it for people with special needs and then I did the life guard. So all of that, in a weekend, I used to work half days on Friday, Saturday and Sunday…I used to make more money than my brother would make in a month and half. So you know, it was good. It was really good It was cash. Not that I knew that you had to pay taxes…I don’t know…its cool. Everything was so easy…I didn’t really understand my friends when they were so stressed out about “Oh my god, I’m going to lose my scholarship”. I was like “What? What do you mean? What is a scholarship”. But now, I know! Because I just have to keep up my grades to keep the scholarship… I just didn’t understand...it didn’t occur to be…ever. My dad bought this house before I decided to come here . The plan was that I was going to build a pool in the back of the house and I was going to have my own swimming academy. Yeah. I had everything, I had the name for it, the certification and I knew which people I wanted to work for me. When you work for somebody, they give you the little babies because that’s hard…or the kids that don’t know how to float. But then when you’re the owner, you just come and put the swimmers to swim. I knew which kinds of people I was going to hire. So it was all planned out. And it was…my dad still tells me… because he kept that house. He keeps selling all the other houses, but not that house… that one and the one that we lived in. And he still tells me the same thing…you know, because I haven’t seen them in 12 years. They have asked for the visa like 8 times. And no, its really hard for a [person from my country] to get visas because of the whole drug thing. But everything was easy. Sometimes when days and weeks like this come, I think “What am I am doing here” hahaha. The question is “What am I doing here?” But, I don’t know, my life would be easier that way. But I think it would still be the same…like I didn’t know how to cook, my mom would do my laundry…I just didn’t know anything. So I appreciate those things…you learn the hard way. I don’t know if I would be able to live in [my country] again…because everything is so slow. Everybody just waits for things to happen. I think things don’t happen; you have to look for them! You have to just work for them. I don’t know if I could. But I know that if I go back, I’ll be busy enough at least for 3 or 4 years just trying to create me…because I have everything…So yeah, my life would be like that.

Paola: So you have options. I don’t know if you want to take a break, or drink water or anything.

***JH:***  No, I’m good.

Paola: Okay, cool. So we talked about this…You said you had friends who came with visas and stuff… did you have friends that you looked to when you came here at first? Either in Florida or California?

***JH:***  Not really. The friends I had, I met them here. And the ones that I knew…we lived in California for 5 years and then we moved to New York…and pretty much everybody that is in the States and is from my town is in New York, in Queens. But I never actually looked for them. When you stop talking to people for that long, it’s like you don’t know them anymore. So it takes more work just to start knowing the again. So I don’t know if I was interested; not even my cousins. I knew that they had their visas and everything was so easy. Some of them are like citizens now. And what is very shocking…I don’t understand why they are working in restaurants and…you just become part of this cycle. I’m like “You live here and you’re working in a restaurant?” Don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying that that’s a bad thing…but if you’re a citizen… you need to step up and at least learn how to speak English. And that’s the thing; they don’t want to do the extra. They see you doing something different and they’re like...

Paola: Like, why?

***JH:***  And it’s funny because I have this friend…we weren’t even friends in high school. But I met him one day and he sent me a request on Facebook and I’m like “Why not”. But then, all of the sudden I posted a photo last winter…you know, I used to be a swimming instructor. So I was pretty tan…but it was winter. So this guy…you know when I decided that I wanted to speak English I decided: “I’m going to stop watching TV in Spanish, I’m going to stop having friends who speak Spanish, at least for a little while. And that’s how I did it. You know I went to college…but if you go for two hours, then go back and speak Spanish the whole time and then watch your novelas…one day I woke up and I said that’s it. So I started putting only the subtitles and I started playing soccer so nobody spoke Spanish.

Paola: So it was just English.

***JH:***  Yeah. So I would laugh at the beginning. I didn’t know how to say anything. And they [the teammates] were like “Give her beer, and then she’ll speak” hahaha and I did. I sure did. And it worked. Everything comes very easy…some alcohol…give her some alcohol! I would understand everything but…when you’re older you become very aware of your accent. You don’t want to make mistakes. You start making all these things in your head. Because when you’re learning you just try to translate things word by word and they don’t make sense.

Paola: Yeah, there’s just some things that…

***JH:***  Yeah. So, you’re like…I don’t know…you’re just very aware when you get older about the mistakes that you can make. But my point is that it was sacrifice. I didn’t understand anything in those movies. I would just… I didn’t even watch the movie… I was just looking at the subtitles the whole time…trying to make sense of it. So when I came here, the same thing…I started playing soccer and pretty much everyone that is there playing soccer is white. Or not Latinas let’s just say. Because you know… there are some stereotypes… when I told my dad…oh he almost got rid of my name on the will. I mean he was very upset. Because that wasn’t for girls…I’m like okay…whatever…you’re too far. There’s nothing you can do. Hahaha. The point with this guy is that I posted this photo and I said something in English right there. and then one say I saw him and I said “Ugh, I’m going to cross the street”. So I crossed the street. And then he saw me and he’s like “Oh” and he was talking to me and he said “So, what’s wrong with you? Do you think you’re white now”. I’m like “What? What do you mean” He said “Look at you, you’re so white and you only speak and write in English. Do you think you’re better than anybody else?” Yeah. So I was like…yeah.

Paola: That’s crazy! Wow!

***JH:***  Yeah. So it’s one of those things… I was like wow! And this is one of the guys that is always in Queens even though he is a citizen; working in a bar or a restaurant just because they don’t want to get out of that cycle. The comfort zone. So I just don’t understand why people who have the opportunity don’t just…it scary out there…it is. And the first years since I’ve been in this country… I met [my partner] like 12 years ago… like right there [in California]. And she’s like “You should pay taxes” and I’m like “Why?” it didn’t make sense…and go to school… and I’m like “What?” So you know, I wasn’t buying it. But I started doing it and everybody’s like “You’re stupid. Why are you paying if you’re not even legal? And you’re school is not going to help you” and blah blah blah. Then I’m like “I’m tired of people treating me like nothing and paying me $5 and hour for…”

Paola: Hard work.

***JH:***  Yeah. Working 12 hours a day, $5 and hour. So I started going to school and it changed things somehow. Even now, I tell my parents… when I graduated last June…they’re like “What is it again?” Every time, during this whole time…I’ve told them like…I don’t know…maybe 20 times. Every time they say “What is it that you study again?” And last month, my mom told me “why haven’t you called” I’m like “I’m busy. I have to study. She’s like “Why do you study so much anyways?” They are always making comments like that. Sometimes I think about it and I think “Oh my god, if I didn’t have [my daughter], I don’t think I would do this”. Just because…you know. And if I didn’t have [my daughter], I don’t know if I would be here. Because there are many different easy options you can take. But now…

Paola: Now you have to think of… your child.

***JH:***  So I’m like okay. I’m going to go one level up and I’m going to finish. But you know…they don’t understand these things, which is….

Paola: Which goes back to like… would you be able to live there after

***JH:***  Yeah. This laziness and this waiting and this “What do I do next”. I just don’t think I could do that.

Paola: I just came back from Mexico and I was there is December for like winter term. I think I agree with that. It’s a different type of lifestyle. It more relaxed, more “Let’s just wait and see”

***JH:***  Yeah. Let’s just wait and I’m like “Mom, did you buy whatever I told you to buy?” “I haven’t had time” and I’m like “You don’t have a job, you don’t…” I don’t know…it is what it is.

Paola: Well, we talked about this. So we can stop now and schedule another one.

***JH:***  And bring the paper you were talking about. And I’m still going to think about my name out there…if I do want it.