



Joshua Gonzalez

La Pana - Louisville, KY

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[unrelated conversation]

Rosie Moosnick: So I'm Rosie Moosnick, and it's August 15th, 2023. And I am with Joshua, and we are in Louisville, Kentucky. And what's this market called?

Josh Gonzalez: It's called Logan Street Market.

Rosie Moosnick: Logan Street, that's right. And if you wanna say your name and date your birth for--?

Josh Gonzalez: My name is Joshua Gonzalez. I was born November 28th, 1992. Yeah, we're in Louisville, Kentucky, Logan Street Market.

Rosie Moosnick: And you're wearing a Cardinals shirt.

Josh Gonzalez: That's right. Go Cards.

Josh Gonzalez: Showing your allegiance.

[Laughter]

Rosie Moosnick: So if you wanna start just by telling me-- tell me about the community you grew up in. What is that--?

Josh Gonzalez: So I grew up in La Grange, Kentucky. I would say it's like borderline between the city of Louisville, which, you know, when I was growing up, coming to the city was like a big thing.

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And kind of like at the border of like rural Kentucky, where we have like Trimble County and Henry County. So I grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood, white schools. But outside of school, I grew up playing sports. So I was involved in a lot of sports growing up. But my mom's side of the family had a big presence in La Grange, in Oldham County. She had I think it was four siblings at one time, and they all had big families, like, three or four kids at least. So all of our holidays were spent together, big holidays like 4th of July, Christmas, Thanksgiving.

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And these gatherings became a place of like intersection between our Mexican culture and things we had adopted from being here in Kentucky. So, for example, Thanksgiving would look like, as far as food goes, like, enchiladas, and then our generation would cook like mashed potatoes and gravy, or Turkey and gravy. And then enchiladas with Turkey became a thing. So we grew up at that type of-- with those types of gatherings. And I think one thing about Mexican people is we celebrate everything.

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A baptism becomes a huge party, you know, you have a band and a DJ and coolers full of beer, all to celebrate a little kid who can't even walk yet's baptism. So we honor those traditions a lot still, like, the baptisms, the quinceañeras, and birthdays, all that. And then I grew up traveling to Mexico. We would go-- we would try to go every two or three years to my parents' hometown. We went usually in the summer or in Christmas break. So that became, like, that was our upbringing here in Kentucky, where I grew up.

Rosie Moosnick: Between two cultures?

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah.

Rosie Moosnick: And how did you relate to white Kentucky?

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Josh Gonzalez: It's been [laughter] sort of a journey, for sure. At first, I remember growing up, and being like, I don't want anything to do with being associated [laughter] from Kentucky, or like being a country person, or like being from somewhere rural. But as I've gotten older, and going back to Mexico, I realize that my parents are from a [laughter] very rural like country-esque place. So it's been me more like stepping into that, and being kind of proud of, you know, obviously there's a lot of problematic things about the American South, but there's a lot of similarities in the cultures.

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So I'm definitely a little more proud to be a Kentuckian now than I was before. And now we have like, I don't know, we have like – leaders that we can be proud of, like Charles Booker and Attica Scott. And you know, we have musicians that are from Kentucky that are like, oh, you could feel a little more proud, like Tyler Childers, who's singing about like open love, and like celebrating queer love. I think it's been a progression of me being more proud of being Kentuckian, for sure.

Rosie Moosnick: Who were your closest friends growing up?

Josh Gonzalez: I had a couple of, well, my best friend, we knew each other from preschool till now.

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Like, we were-- our parents knew each other before we were born. But his parents are from Pachuca, Mexico. And they were one of the first families, along with my parents, in La Grange of like Latinx families. So we grew up spending a lot of time together. That was my best friend growing up, for sure. And then all my [laughter] really good friends were always the Latinos, for sure. I had a couple really good like white soccer friends, but I didn't spend a whole lot of time with them outside of soccer, anything having to do with sports.

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We always kind of found each other, the Latinos did. Found our way to socialize.

Rosie Moosnick: What did your parents do, or what did they do? What's their work?

Josh Gonzalez: They're in, I guess you could say, public service. My dad taught ESL at the Board of Education, and then was a paralegal and interpreter at an immigration law firm, and then was a medical interpreter. And he just retired. And then my mom has worked at the Oldham County Health Department doing similar work, kind of liaison between the Spanish-speaking community and the Health Department, and an interpreter also.

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Rosie Moosnick: What were some of the challenges you faced growing up, do you feel like?

Josh Gonzalez: I had a pretty, like, it was a pretty easy upbringing. I did feel like there were kind of two worlds that I had to, like, go back and forth. And there was one that I definitely felt like more comfortable and more free. And I used to, when we would go to Mexico, I would cry to my mom and be like, "I don't want to go back to Kentucky. Like, I love it here," [laughter]

because I felt free, and they weren't as flexible as far as like being out or going out here in Kentucky.

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But in Mexico, they're like, you know, "Go with your cousins. Go with your uncles." We had a lot more freedom down there. And when we would go down to Mexico, because there was so much family, and part of the tradition is just when you see family, you bring them in, like, you sit them down. You ask 'em what they want to eat, what they want to drink. You walk to the plaza, which is like the town center where everyone goes in the evening to get an ice cream, or just walk around and sit, and there's live music. And that's just kind of like stitched into everyday life. And growing up in La Grange, where everything was so like far away, you couldn't really walk anywhere. You needed a car to get everywhere.

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You had a couple of friends that like lived up the street. And something that was an everyday thing in Mexico was not an [laughter] everyday thing in Kentucky. So I was always like, "I don't want to leave. Like, let me stay here. Enroll me in school." I think that was probably one of the most challenging things. And then what else? Yeah, like kind of tied into that is being able to celebrate and feel seen in my Mexican identity. It's something I didn't get to discover until I was here in Kentucky like as an adult. I discovered that through dancing or through cooking or baking.

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Cause now, we have like a weekly dance social here at the market--

Rosie Moosnick: Oh, cool.

--Josh Gonzalez: -on Tuesday nights. Yeah. So we get together with a bunch of instructors from the area, and it's a free event for the community, and each instructor takes turns teaching a 45-minute intro to dance lesson on Tuesday nights.

Rosie Moosnick: That's cool.

Josh Gonzalez: So I think growing up that was probably some of the challenges.

Rosie Moosnick: How do you feel you've come to this place of owning your Latin identity?

Josh Gonzalez: It's been like an exploration and work that I've had to do on my own, I think. I've been traveling to Mexico.

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Growing up, I would go with family, and we never left outside of-- we never visited anywhere outside of the small town my parents were from. But when I was 19, I took my first solo trip to Mexico for six weeks, and just exploring different parts of Mexico, going to the art museums, learning about the history. Actually, let me backtrack. It started in high school with Erin Howard.

Rosie Moosnick: She's incredible.

Josh Gonzalez: Incredible. The first time I went to that Latino Leadership and College Experience Camp, that was my first taste of seeing other Latinos in Kentucky that looked like me.

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And I think Erin did a really good job of, oh, she brought the music, she brought the people that looked like us, like, the representation in different areas like engineering or the arts. Yeah, just being able to see that and be seen in that identity was one of the most affirming things. And it was one of those things where you don't want to leave, right, because it felt so comfortable and easy to just be you. That's definitely where it started. And I think because the workforce in the restaurant industry is very heavy Spanish-speaking Latin American folks, like, those are the spaces where I always felt the most comfortable too.

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So I found a restaurant gig as a busboy and waiter when I was 18, 19.

Rosie Moosnick: [Sneezes] Excuse me.

Josh Gonzalez: Bless you.

Rosie Moosnick: Thank you [laughter].

Josh Gonzalez: So I always looked for those spaces where I could be myself. And then, yeah, the traveling was another component that like every time I was in Mexico, I just felt free and alive, and it just felt good to be down there.

Rosie Moosnick: How have you reproduced that feeling right now in your life?

Josh Gonzalez: I get to [laughter] work. I get to come into work every day, and share this space with folks that are like me or that are curious and open-minded and want to learn about the culture.

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We do that through creating these spaces and these experiences. Almost everyone on the staff is bilingual. So it's really important to us to be able to receive people who also speak Spanish in their native tongue. I mean, you can just see it sometimes when they might not expect you to speak Spanish, but when they do, their face lights up, or you can relate to them about where they're from or, you know, what a bakery back home was like to them. So creating these experiences, internally and externally, for our guests is I think one way that we cultivate that.

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What was your question?

Rosie Moosnick: How do you recreate?

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah.

Rosie Moosnick: It sounds like you've been seeking this place to really find yourself--

Josh Gonzalez: Definitely.

Rosie Moosnick: --express yourself.

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah, so we do that. And then the music we play at work every day is in Spanish, and we have the dancing stuff, which Megan, who was in there, is also a dance instructor in the same collective. Chef Paco and the team worked with the JCTC (Jefferson County Technical and Community College) Latinx Student Union to host a-- we call it a Posada.

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In the Catholic tradition in Mexico, I think it's the 12 days leading up to Christmas, or it's supposed to be like the journey of-- I don't know too much about the story in religion [laughter].

Rosie Moosnick: Uh-oh.

[Laughter]

Josh Gonzalez: I know, my mom would kill me.

Rosie Moosnick: God no, I was just gonna say [laughter].

Josh Gonzalez: My mom would kill me. I'm a bad Catholic. Anyway, the 12 days leading up to Christmas, people in the community take turns receiving other people from the community with music, with food, with drinks. So we had one here at the market, and we were able-- it was free for the public. We were able to secure some sponsorships. And we fed about-- it was like 500 people. It was incredible. And we had a lineup of music, all Latin American artists, dancing, giveaways.

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So through different event programming too, we're able to cultivate that, like, recreate those experiences. And luckily, our team is very passionate about creating these experiences as well. Diego's from Mexico, from Oaxaca, which is like, from my travels in Mexico, it's the richest in culture and tradition in all of Mexico that I've seen. And a lot of it has to do with their like sociopolitical structure where like these communities are self-governed, and like they control who comes in and opens businesses or buys property. And Chef Francisco, who's the chef at Foko, he's from Tlaxcala, which is just outside of Mexico City.

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And he's a partner over there at the bakery as well, and he's also very about creating these experiences as well. So it's like how can we stitch it into everyday life with the things that we love to do?

Rosie Moosnick: So it's a wider co...let me step back, because before the interview, you were talking about going in the Military. How did that figure, your Military experience, figure into all this [laughter]?

Josh Gonzalez: Let's see. Military, even when I was in the Military, I would-- I remember being in boot camp, and bootcamp really sucked. It was not fun But I had a couple of bunk mates, and by that time I was dancing a little bit.

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In bootcamp, I'd get everyone together, and we would teach a few basic steps of like bachata or salsa. And then any free time we would get, it was always like, "Where can we go dance, or where can we go [laughter] get tacos?" But I think I guess I learned a lot of cool things in the Military as far as like personal values like discipline and structure and being able to work well with others, you know, a very diverse group of people, like motivation, and being able to see a bigger picture.

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Now like being able to-- like this is our mission, and this is what we're trying to achieve, and this is what we're trying to get up, and being really excited about it and pumped up about it. And now it gets to be something that's a lot-- it's a lot more meaningful, I guess, personally and for the people around us, or the people that I'm working with. And it's like a mission we can really get

behind. I think that's one of the influences that the Military has played. I think that's-- I don't have too much more to add about the Military.

Rosie Moosnick: About the Military?

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah.

Rosie Moosnick: It was sort of a turn and--

Josh Gonzalez: Right.

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Because I joined the Reserves, I did that full year of training, and then I came back. And they call us weekend warriors for reservists 'cause we only go one weekend per month to train, and then two weeks in the summer. So I say thankfully because I was able to be more of a civilian than I was a Military member, I think. But I think the story may have been-- who knows what would've happened [laughter] if I would've joined active duty as a full-time Military member. But, yeah, being able to have that balance of, oh, I'm just gonna go play Military this weekend, but I'm still a civilian, I think I was lucky to have that balance, for sure.

Rosie Moosnick: How was it being Latinx in the Military?

Josh Gonzalez: We're definitely the minority.

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A lot of things get looked over in the Military. There's always like, you know, not so much anymore, but there are still like racist remarks that are just like, oh, well, that's just part of what happens here. That was until, you know, that was my experience in the Military up until the last

two years, where our unit commander was a Black queer man from Alabama, and he was very open about who he was. And he didn't take shit from anyone.

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There was a racist remark that was made by one of the white Marines against a Black Marine. And it was brought to like the section leader's attention, and then to the commanding officer's attention. And they weren't gonna do anything about it until Chief Moore found out. And Chief Moore, like, I was there when he went up to the commanding officer's office, and just lit him up, and was like, "If you don't do anything about this, I'm reporting you to the higher-ups, like, the main Marine Corps Reserve Center." So it was cool to see someone advocate for minorities in a space like that, and I learned a lot about speaking up and having a voice.

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But I know there's a lot more initiatives now to building inclusive spaces in the Military. But it wasn't bad. We still all kind of-- with the few Latinos that there were, we always [laughter] find a way to congregate and do our thing outside of work.

Rosie Moosnick: How do you feel you express your voice in this work, in the baking and your businesses?

Josh Gonzalez: Oh, that's such a good one. Let's see.

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Our work now, it's all-- everything that we do is a little piece of home. So let's see. I have to backtrack a little bit again. So growing up, I would go-- when we would go to Mexico where my parents are from, I have an uncle who has a convenience store, which is where we spent a lot of

time. And he has like a wood-fire grill right outside of his convenience store. And it was probably one of my favorite places to be, other than the beach.

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And I got to see how he always had music playing, and I got to see how he interacted on a day-to-day basis with the community around him. And people came in every day [clears throat], excuse me, for something, whether it was like a few pieces of bread or some tortillas or a mezcal. And he would cook every day for-- just there was a lot of people [laughter], a lot of guys that would like to hang out there and drink. So he would feed a lot of the guys, and people might throw-- he didn't charge anyone. He would just-- people would pitch in money and be like, "Hey, here you go." And I think that's one of my core memories, like, the places that I really like to be.

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So being here and being able-- we get to do the same thing here. And we talk to a lot of the same customers all the time. We know people by name. We know their kids' names. And I think that that's one way that my voice is expressed through what we're doing. Can you ask the question again?

Rosie Moosnick: What if I ask you, where's home for you?

Josh Gonzalez: Where's home?

Rosie Moosnick: Mm-hmm.

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Josh Gonzalez: I guess, at this point, home can be-- geographically it's somewhere. It's either Kentucky or Mexico. But through this exploration of my identity, home can be wherever I

can bring these things that I'm passionate about with me. So we've created a home here in Logan Street Market through baking bread, through meeting new people every day, through the dancing and the gathering and the celebrations.

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Home is where we can be-- where we can do all these things. And right now, it's Shelby Park here in Louisville, Kentucky.

Rosie Moosnick: And so how did you get to the businesses? How did you get to this point of opening them?

Josh Gonzalez: I started working in restaurants when I was 18, 19. I finished that year of training in the Military, and came back to La Grange. And I was working at a Tex-Mex restaurant, and I had a really good manager there, who was really passionate about hospitality, and taking care of people, and making sure people walked away with a good experience, and learning people's names, and just becoming part of the community where you're at.

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And he was also a dancer. He actually got me into dancing.

Rosie Moosnick: Oh, cool.

Josh Gonzalez: So after work, we would go to dance socials. We would come from La Grange to Louisville. There was a live salsa band that played on Thursdays, and we'd try to go every Thursday. And then I was getting kind of bored [laughter], so I came to Louisville to work in a Mexican restaurant that was a little more, I guess you could say, higher end. And it wasn't focused so much on like Southwest cuisine but more like hyper-regional. And there I got to work

with some really cool, really good owners and managers, who we're also very passionate about hospitality and service, and consistency in making a good product, making it the same every day.

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And then from there, I went to Con Huevos!, which is another-- it's a Mexican breakfast restaurant here. And when I got there is when I met-- okay. So in El Camino, which is a restaurant I worked at in Louisville, I worked with mostly-- I was the only Latinx person that worked in the front of the house.

Rosie Moosnick: Why?

Josh Gonzalez: There were two dudes in the kitchen, two guys in the kitchen, and one girl in the kitchen that were from Mexico also. So it was fun. I learned. It was a good learning opportunity.

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But then the opportunity came up to work at this Con Huevos!, this breakfast Mexican spot, and the owners were from Mexico, and pretty much everyone that worked there was Latinx. And I remember just getting there and being like, this is awesome. I can take a little bit of what I learned, come here, and bring something of value, and be really comfortable working there. And that's where I met Chef Francisco, Chef Paco, who's a native of Mexico. And we became roommates, and he became one of my salsa students. At the time, I was teaching in a studio. And we just started traveling to different cities for dance events.

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And, of course, everywhere we went, we were like, "All right, where's the good food? Where's the good drink?" And we were always very curious about what other people were doing, and what we would do when we had our own spot one day. And then the opportunity came up when Logan Street Market opened, which just really served as like this incubator for either first-time business owners or somebody that wants to test a concept. So we had-- it was a low start-up cost to get in here, and we had enough. Each of us had enough saved up just like to, with the bare minimum, to open up. So we opened in October of 2019, like six months right before the pandemic.

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And we opened with this concept of like this intersection of Mexico and the American South for like breakfast and lunch. So a lot of it ends up being like a lot of comfort food. So we have like biscuits and gravy with jalapeño gravy, or chicken and waffles with like chili-battered fried chicken. And then backtracking a little bit, when we were-- when Chef Paco and I were working at Con Huevos!, we met Diego. He's the baker.

Rosie Moosnick: The baker?

Josh Gonzalez: Uh-huh. He was backpacking through the States. So we met him through one of our friends who was a regular at Con Huevos! who was also my-- his name's Wes.

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Wes was my philosophy professor at JCTC. But Wes was taking students to Oaxaca every year for an exchange program, and that's how he met Diego. So Diego was here visiting Wes, and he brought him by. He was supposed to be here for like two or three days, but he ended up staying for a month, I think. And, I mean, from the time we met him, we just hit it off. We partied a lot,

danced, cooked. And he was off after that. He was like, "Hey, if you all ever come to Oaxaca, let me know. You'll have a house down there," which is very much like [laughter] a Mexic...I don't know if it's a Latinx thing in general.

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But people that I would meet in Mexico that I had never met before, that I didn't have a connection with, you meet 'em, and you get to talking, and they're like, "Well, let me know whenever you come down, like, you have your house here." And that was the same with Diego. So fast-forward to October in 2019, Chef Paco gets a text from Diego, and he's like, "Y'all, I'm marrying this girl from Wisconsin, and we're gonna settle in Louisville. Do y'all have any work for me?" And we were like, "Heck yeah. Like, come on." So he started off our pastry program when we opened here. So on the weekends, he would make like mini cheesecake bites or little desserts like that that were mostly like traditional Oaxacan baking and pastries.

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So then the pandemic hit, and we went from a staff of like 12 to 3. This whole market was empty. It was like apocalyptic in here. And everyone ended up shutting down except for us, and there was a wine bar here at the time, and the butcher. And Diego was, like, everyone was, you know, rightfully so concerned about health, and being exposed to a scary thing. But Diego was the one that stuck around, and he was like, "Hey, if you all need anything, let me know."

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And I think just a couple days after the announcement, like the next week, he started baking like traditional pan dulce, like Mexican bread. And we were going like door-to-door, selling the bread. And then shortly after that, we went to a grocery store, and it was crazy out there. Like,

everything was empty. The shelves were empty. And we were like, what if we just start making loaves? Because we didn't see any loaves. And it took off. Like, we went from making like a few loaves a week to, like, we were making from like 50 to 100 every week.

Rosie Moosnick: Wow.

Josh Gonzalez: And we started like this wholesale of bread to different markets around the area. And we were big on social media, so people would start requesting like [laughter], "Hey, can you make this or, hey, can you make this?"

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But we were working out of the kitchen prep space, and we had a little oven that only had three racks in it. So we were using our neighbor to the right's oven, and our neighbor to the left's oven in the morning, until we were like, we need a production space [laughter]. We can't keep doing it out of here. And the space where the bakery is at now, it didn't have the window before. It was just a prep kitchen. That space opened up, and we were like, all right, this is it. We're gonna start the bakery business. And that's where it was born. A year later, we had like our grand opening with the ribbon cutting. And then last year, we designed our mobile bakery, which is La Pana on Wheels, where we have an oven on there and an espresso machine.

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And that came about from our motorcycle trip. On the way back, we just ran into a lot of food trucks, all taco trucks. And the last stop was Chef Julio's spot in Nashville, who's also a native of Mexico. But he's bringing heirloom corn from Mexico, and doing like the whole nixtamalization process here. So we talked to him, and he was super successful with his food truck. And we were like, all right, we're gonna try a food truck or a bakery on wheels. And it's been a real big hit.

People seem to love like this mobile bakery idea, where we can pop up into a neighborhood, or we do like events, or we went to some horse farms out in Oldham County.

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We're doing a Day of the Dead event in November this year. So it's been fun to put the essence of what we're doing on a mobile truck. And that's been the journey of the businesses [laughter].

Rosie Moosnick: It sounds incredible.

Josh Gonzalez: It's been awesome.

Rosie Moosnick: Yeah [laughter].

Josh Gonzalez: It's so much fun [laughter].

Rosie Moosnick: And all of you do the baking and the cooking and things?

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah. I learned to bake from Diego. My mom was a cake baker growing up. She did all the cakes, birthday cakes for cousins and baptisms and quinceañeras. But I was more of just an assistant. She didn't let me touch anything, rightfully so.

Rosie Moosnick: That's a mother too.

[Laughter]

Josh Gonzalez: For sure.

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But when I started in the bakery, I was like, dang, this feels really familiar. It feels good. And I really enjoy working with my hands, and sharing stories over bread. And I've always just

enjoyed meeting people, and talking to people, and connecting with people. What do they call them in-- is it the third place in sociology? I don't know if I'm getting that right.

Rosie Moosnick: I don't know what you mean.

Josh Gonzalez: Some guy came in, and he's like, there's this idea of a third place where like you have your first place, which is your home, and your second place is like your job, where you spend a lot of your other time. And then you have your third places, which are like, I guess, your social institutions.

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Like, I don't know, you might go to like a park or like a bowling alley or a movie theater or a bakery. And I think that growing up in Mexico, and having all these places where you can go outside of your home or your work just makes life richer. And the idea of being welcome somewhere, people know you by your name, is special. Damn, I forgot where I was going with that.

Rosie Moosnick: That's it. So how do you feel connected to Louisville, or has that changed in the past couple years, your connection to Louisville?

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Josh Gonzalez: Well, I've always been a Cards fan, and I'm finishing my undergrad there right now. So I have like the sports part of it. Growing up, we would go to a big festival they have here called WorldFest. Have you heard of it?

Rosie Moosnick: I've been to it, yeah.

Josh Gonzalez: You've been to it?

Rosie Moosnick: Yeah.

Josh Gonzalez: We would come every year. Like, our family would bring us, and it was like the highlight of the end of summer, getting into fall. And so I guess I kind of grew up with like a-- I don't know how to word this-- like a connection to the world or curiosity about other cultures or other people.

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My connection to Louisville now? I don't know. I guess with all the things we have going on, I feel really good about calling this place home, the people in the community, and to see how the community's growing, and the plans that we have for the future. I'm really excited to call Louisville home right now. This past summer, we were able to take, well, last summer, we sent-- Diego and I went to Oaxaca. But we were also able to send one of our bakers to Oaxaca a separate time, to hang out with Diego's family, and learn from them.

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And this past summer, we took 10 chefs, bakers, and just like people interested in food and culture from Kentucky to Mexico City and Oaxaca.

Rosie Moosnick: Wow.

Josh Gonzalez: So we did this cultural and culinary immersion program with the University of Gastronomy in Oaxaca. So we did a bunch of workshops with them, and we focused on traditional Oaxacan cooking. So we got the rundown from like the OG mom cooks that are cooking like with no electricity still. They're like hand-grinding everything with-- they call them metates, like these stone--

Rosie Moosnick: Wow.

Josh Gonzalez: --blending mechanisms.

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And then we're bringing I believe it's 20 students from Oaxaca to Kentucky in the spring of next year.

Rosie Moosnick: Wow.

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah. So they'll do-- we're still trying to figure out the logistics of which-- how are we gonna partner up with the culinary programs here in the city. But it'll be-- it'll probably end up being a combination of both, like the JCTC culinary program and Sullivan. And since we're friends with a lot of the chefs here in the city, like opportunities where we can come and observe and ask questions, 'cause I think the students down there are really curious about like international cuisine. And just so like, yeah, to have that opportunity, we're really excited about that.

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So I definitely feel connected to Louisville. We're creating this bridge between Mexico and Kentucky.

Rosie Moosnick: Wow. And how did you all come to all these different ideas of--?

Josh Gonzalez: It's been really, first of all, an assessment of like what we value and what we like to do. We all love traveling. We all love an adventure. We all love learning about new foods, and people, and the stories behind those people, and where they learned how to do the things that they do. So Wes, who is that philosophy professor, he's retired now. And he helped us

coordinate, 'cause he had all the contacts for the exchange program. So we actually did-- all these adults did home stays in Oaxaca.

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So he's the one that helped us with the idea for creating this exchange between Mexico, Oaxaca, or Mexico, Oaxaca, and Kentucky. So that was the idea for that. He retired, and he was like, "Hey, I think this would be a good idea." And we were like, "You know what, that's a great idea. Just make that happen."

Rosie Moosnick: So it sounds like the businesses are just like one small piece of this larger sort of effort you're--

Josh Gonzalez: Definitely.

Rosie Moosnick: --building and things--

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah.

Rosie Moosnick: --a sense of community in place.

Josh Gonzalez: Definitely, that's the goal, a sense of community in place, definitely. Yeah.

0:51:01

Rosie Moosnick: How do you think your ancestors speak to you through this work?

Josh Gonzalez: Wow. I was actually-- how do they speak to me through this work? I know they're really excited and encouraging every step of the way. I come from a family that values all these things, like sharing time and space together, being intentional about cooking and music and

dancing. And when we were there just now, it was like every day, like, this was just everyday life.

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There was-- I'm starting to get to the point where a lot of-- my grandparents have passed. They've been passed for a while. But like the older aunts and uncles, like my parents' siblings, are also starting to move on to the next phase. And I get more, like, the older I get, the more curious I get too, and the more questions I want to ask about, you know, how were my grandparents? Like, what did they do? What kind of traditions did you all have? And I do get to learn about that a lot from my mom, and from my aunts and uncles that are still living. But I had one experience back home in Michoacán this past time, where my aunt, my Tía Rosa on that side, passed away four years ago, and she was the oldest woman of the family.

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She was the matriarch. She's the one that kind of brought everyone together. And there's so many things that I wanted to ask her. But I feel really fortunate this past trip because my cousin Edwin, who was the youngest of the family, he was the one that was closest to her, and the one that spent the most time with her, and the one that learned all of her recipes in the kitchen because he was with her in the kitchen from a young age up until when she passed away. And he made a recipe for us that he hadn't made since she passed away. And it was beautiful because he still had like all the ingredients in a bowl that they used the last time they made it.

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Rosie Moosnick: Wow.

Josh Gonzalez: So we got up that morning, and we went to the market, which was just a few blocks away. We got all the ingredients that we needed for the mole, and he just starts going at it in the kitchen. And a lot of his mannerisms, and the way that he moved in the kitchen, and the way he joked around, and the way that he made us feel in that kitchen, and the way he was bossing us around to do certain things was-- I felt my aunt there, and I felt her presence. I felt her love.

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And I felt like this was one way of her saying like, this is the way or one of the ways that-- and we all, like, it was a magical moment 'cause we were all in tears living through this moment. And we had the music blasting. And it was kind of reaffirming that like this is the space that we need to be occupying. So every time we step in the kitchen or in the bakery, that's what it feels like. It feels like how lucky are we that we get to experience this on this side, and the people who come to visit us like our guests, like, they're also-- these are the memories that they're gonna walk away with, like, these routines that we have, and these rituals that we have.

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They'll have this when-- this is a way of keeping a memory alive or keeping the people that we love alive in our hearts. So I think that that's one way that my ancestors communicate through what we're doing. And it's definitely, like, it's purpose driven, so it feels good. A lot of the times, it doesn't feel like work, unless I'm like working on some Excel spreadsheet or I'm like, oh, this sucks.

Rosie Moosnick: [Laughter]

Josh Gonzalez: But everything outside of that is-- it just really fills your heart to be here. It's good. It feels good.

Rosie Moosnick: That's pretty extraordinary and lucky to feel that you're doing magic.

Josh Gonzalez: Definitely. Definitely. It is.

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We're just like [laughter], yeah, we're just a bunch of witches and wizards, like, putting all these concoctions together.

Rosie Moosnick: You're smiling all the time.

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah. It's fun. We have a good time.

Rosie Moosnick: Let me see. I don't want to keep you too. Is there something you wanna add that we haven't said you'd want people to know?

Josh Gonzalez: We're, I mean, there's like the future plans for what we have. We have, right across the street, we, you know, we've been talking about-- there's something really charming about the window concept. But we've also talked so much about having our own space where people can sit down.

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So we are taking over the space like right up the street.

Rosie Moosnick: Oh wow.

Josh Gonzalez: And it's 5,000 square feet. So the breakfast café kind of like diner will live in the same building as the bakery. So we'll be taking the bakery over to this space with our own

seating area and still like open bakery concept where you can talk to the bakers and the barista when you walk in. So that's coming up.

Rosie Moosnick: When is that opening?

Josh Gonzalez: The breakfast café is coming in the fall of this year.

Rosie Moosnick: That's just like a month away or so?

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah.

Rosie Moosnick: Oh wow.

Josh Gonzalez: We're shooting for like November.

Rosie Moosnick: Wow.

Josh Gonzalez: And then the bakery will be here in the next phase, six months after, in the spring of 2024.

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And right in between the breakfast spot and the bakery, there's an art gallery/event space. So there we'll be hosting like our weekly dance event, live music. And we're toying around with the idea of having like a movement space, so where we can offer-- Chef Paco's also a yoga instructor. So he'll be offering bilingual yoga classes as well as I'll be offering bilingual dance classes. And we're trying to get-- we have a friend who does bilingual guided meditations and different fitness-related things.

1:00:05

So that event/movement space will also serve as like morning classes. So that's the big-- that's the goal for the next year.

Rosie Moosnick: That's incredible.

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah, we're excited.

Rosie Moosnick: That's incredible.

Josh Gonzalez: But, other than that, I think that's it.

Rosie Moosnick: That's it. So you must be doing well with the business to be able to--

Josh Gonzalez: Yeah, we've been really--

Rosie Moosnick: --expand things.

Josh Gonzalez: We're really grateful. We've been super lucky. We worked really hard too.

I guess we can give ourselves some credit. During the pandemic, we were working like 60- or 70-hour weeks, because there was only-- it was only us.

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So we worked like that for maybe like almost four, five months. And we've we got Mike, who's the owner of the building, was really flexible with the rent. So we were lucky there. The city also offered some like COVID relief grants that really helped us out a lot, and that really gave us a nice cushion to be able to invest in some different equipment, be able to hire on a couple more folks so that we can focus on other things like sales and different streams of revenue.

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So we've just been working hard, and coming up with ideas. Almost everyone that works at either spot is Latinx. Megan isn't, and we have two other ones, Leia and Jacob . But they all speak Spanish. They've all been to different countries in Latin America. And that's been really important for us too is, like, I guess when you talk about social justice, like, we also talk about, like, people don't think about it, but like language justice.

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Like, when someone who doesn't speak very good English or doesn't speak English at all, like, training them or having-- training them in Spanish, or putting them in a position of leadership, or being able to host, like, have these weekly meetups in Spanish, like our onboarding packet is in Spanish, like, people don't think about these things. But they're things that make a really big difference, as far as someone feeling welcome in a space. So those are things that we've also-- that we try to keep in mind and work on as well.

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We're in a really lucky spot too because Chef Paco and Chef Diego, like, you don't-- it's not very often that you find someone who's an executive chef or an owner who can speak to you in your native tongue. So it's really cool to see like line cooks or prep cooks who get to learn directly from, or like an apprentice, they get to learn directly from someone that like, wow, they're from Mexico. Like, they did it, like, we can do it, type of thing. So it's really just special to have that also.

Rosie Moosnick: What particular talent do you think is your strength?

Josh Gonzalez: [Laughter] I can turn pretty much any experience into a party.

Rosie Moosnick: [Laughter] That's a talent [laughter].

1:04:57

Josh Gonzalez: I love parties. I love dancing. I love like that joyous spirit of like-- I love what I do every day, so being able to walk in the door, and bring that energy, you know, Diego has the same talent; Paco also. Like, we just come in the door, and we're just ready to have fun. And relationships with people. I think those are the main ones that I'd like to highlight, for sure.

Rosie Moosnick: I can see that in you.

Josh Gonzalez: Thanks.

[Laughter]

Rosie Moosnick: You're welcome. Anything else you'd like to say before I shut it off?

Josh Gonzalez: I think that's it.

Rosie Moosnick: Let me let it just sit for a second. They want ambient sound to get the sound for a couple seconds.

[End]