



Isela Juarez, Vianey Juarez, Nereyda Mali, Christopher Santiago, Victor Santiago
Tacos El Nevado
Charlotte, North Carolina

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[INTERVIEW STARTS AT 00:00:10]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Es el once de marzo de 2017 y estamos aquí en Charlotte, North Carolina en Taquería El Nevado. Y estoy con las personas Vianey Juárez, Nereyda Mali, Víctor Santiago, Isela Juárez, y Christopher Santiago. Okay. Víctor, ¿me puede decir un poquito de cómo vinieron aquí a Charlotte?

[It's March 11, 2017 and we're here in Charlotte, North Carolina in Taquería El Nevado. And I'm with Vianey Juárez, Nereyda Mali, Víctor Santiago, Isela Juárez, and Christopher Santiago. Okay. Victor, can you tell me a little about how you all came here to Charlotte?]

[00:00:40]

Víctor Santiago: Pues, nuestra llegada aquí fue, por gracias a nuestra familia, a mi cuñada y a mi concuño, que ellos vivían aquí, ya residían en esta ciudad. Llegamos aquí, pues, ya de regreso cuando fuimos a México hace diez años. Y al llegar aquí, pues, nos cobijaron, nos dieron lugar donde quedarnos y pues, de allí, empezamos nosotros a buscar trabajo y buscar mejores posibilidades de vida, para nosotros y para nuestra familia, para nuestros hijos.

[Well, our arrival here was, thanks to our family, my sister-in-law and her brother. They lived here, and they lived in this city. We arrived here, then, or returned after we went to Mexico ten years ago. And when we arrived here, they sheltered us, they gave us a place

to stay and then, from there, we began to look for work and seek better possibilities of life, for us and for our family, for our children.]

[00:01:13]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Y me puede decir de dónde son? [*And can you tell me where you are from?*]

[00:01:15]

Víctor Santiago: Nosotros venimos del estado de Oaxaca. Mi esposa y mi cuñada, pues, ellas son de los valles centrales de Oaxaca y yo soy de la región Mixteca. Es un poco más al sur de la ciudad, del estado, pero—

[We came from the state of Oaxaca. My wife and sister-in-law, well, they are from the central valley of Oaxaca, and I'm from the Mixteca region. It's a little farther south of the city, of the state, but—]

[00:01:29]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Y cuándo tenían la idea de abrir una taquería? [*And when did you have the idea to open a taquería?*]

[00:01:35]

Víctor Santiago: Yo creo que abrir una taquería no era una idea que ya estaba planeado. Esto fue algo muy—como muy repentino. Nosotros, como le cuento, mi esposa y mi

cuñada, pues ellas nacieron en lo que es la—en una familia de personas como de cocineras. Entonces agarraron la experiencia y allí es donde aprendieron a hacerlo y tenían esa, esa inquietud de poder hacer algo. Entonces fue que nosotros empezamos a idearnos de que manera podíamos trabajar.

[I think opening a taqueria was not an idea that was already planned. This was something very ... very sudden. We, as I tell you, my wife and my sister-in-law, because they were born in what is ... in a family of cooks. Then they took the experience and that's where they learned how to do it and they had that, that unease of being able to do something. It was then that we began to figure out how we could work it out.]

[00:02:13]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Y usted sabía de cocinar antes? *[And did you know how to cook before?]*

[00:02:16]

Víctor Santiago: Eh, pues, para hacerle sincero, pues nosotros por ser personas de pueblo, muchas veces nos metimos en lo que es la cocina, pero no teníamos la idea de cómo hacer un poco lo que es la comida más, un poco más, este, sofisticado, ¿no? O sea, la comida de un pueblo es una comida muy sencilla pero, sí me gustaba la cocina hasta que, pues, con mi esposa aprendí a, aprendimos a cocinar y aprendimos a, a amar lo que es la, la cocina. Entonces fue que nos nació el amor hacia la comida.

[So, to be honest, because we are people of a small town, we often get into the kitchen, but we did not have the idea how to do food more, a little more, sophisticated, you know? I mean, the food of our town is a very simple meal, but I did like the kitchen until, then, with my wife I learned to, we learned to cook and we learned to, to love to cook. It was then that we fell in love with food.]

[00:02:51]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Y usted me puede decir su nombre? *[And can you tell me your name?]*

[00:02:53]

Isela Juárez: Ah, mi nombre es Isela. *[Ah, my name is Isela.]*

[00:02:54]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Isela.

[00:02:55]

Isela Juárez: Mm-hmm.

[00:02:56]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Isela Juárez.

[00:02:57]

Isela Juárez: Juárez, sí. [*Juárez, yes.*]

[00:02:58]

Victoria Bouloubasis: La esposa de Víctor. [*Victor's wife.*]

[00:02:59]

Isela Juárez: Mm-hmm, sí. [*Mm hmm, yes*]

[00:03:00]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y por lo que dice Víctor, ¿me imagino que usted es la cocinera?

[*And from what Victor says, I imagine you're the cook?*]

[00:03:05]

Isela Juárez: Eh, sí. Yeah. [*Eh, yes. Yeah*]

[00:03:07]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Me puede explicar un poquito cuando empezaron con el restaurante? ¿Cómo se sentía, este, este, tener la comida sencilla como explica Víctor, pero ahora ofrecerlo a, a una comunidad que quizás no sabe qué es?

[*Can you explain a little bit to me when you all started with the restaurant? How did it feel, this, this, having simple food as Victor explains, but now offer it to a community that may not know what it is?*]

[00:03:27]

Isela Juárez: Ah, sí, lo que pasa es que, como siempre mirábamos como la comida en los restaurantes es más, este, es algo más presentable, nosotros queríamos de gustar a los clientes como algo más casero, que la gente se sintiera como que estaba comiendo en casa. Por eso nosotros optamos por servir los platillos que normalmente se comen en casa, lo que es un hogar mexicano. Uh huh, que es frijolitos, arroz, y carne guisada, y pues, nos especializamos en los tacos, porque es algo que, en el momento en que nosotros empezamos, empezamos en una lonchera. Entonces allí no teníamos el equipo como para cocinar...um, como se puede...cazuela, como dicen. Guisos. Entonces optamos por los tacos y quisimos hacerlos como con tortillas recién hechas que es lo que nos identifica a nosotros. En el momento que la gente esta pidiéndolos, sus taquitos, en ese momento la tortilla esta recién esponjadita y, y lleva la carne y ahora hacia el plato y del plato a la boca. Así, nos, nos vamos siempre por ofrecer lo más fresco, no tener la comida, como, como se trabaja aquí normalmente en los restaurantes, vea que, que por departamento de salud, siempre se requiere que tenga un refrigerador y todo, entonces, los tacos—no es así porque uno está haciendo la carne y la carne a la tortilla y de la tortilla va al cliente.

[Oh yeah, what happened is that, as we always considered the food in restaurants more, more presentable, we wanted to offer the customers as something more homemade, so that people would feel like they were eating at home. That's why we choose to serve the dishes that are normally eaten at home, in a Mexican home. Uh huh, which is beans, rice, and stewed meat, and well, we specialize in tacos, because it is something that, when we started, we started in a food truck. So there we did not have the equipment to cook ... um,

as you can ... casserole, as they say. Stews. We then opted for tacos and wanted to make them with freshly made tortillas, which is what identifies us. At the moment that the people are asking for them, their taquitos, at that moment the tortilla is sponged and, and holds the meat and then to the plate and from the plate to the mouth. So, we, we are always going to offer the freshest, not having the food, like, as it normally works here in restaurants, you see, because of the health department, you're always required to have a refrigerator and everything, The tacos no, because you are making the meat and the meat goes on the tortilla and the tortilla goes to the customer.]

[00:04:50]

Victoria Bouloubasis: *¿Y qué me ha dicho antes de la tortilla? [And what did you tell me earlier about the tortilla?]*

[00:04:52]

Isela Juárez: Ah, pues, que optamos por nosotros hacer las tortillas, que estén, tiene— para hacer una buena tortilla, igual tiene que estar bien esponjadita la tortilla y allí es donde ya lleva la carne y eso es lo que nos ha identificado a nosotros.

[Oh, we chose to make tortillas, which are, they have ... to make a good tortilla, the tortilla has to be well sponged and that's where the meat is placed and that's what has identified us.]

[00:05:09]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y me ha dicho usted que la tortilla es de Oaxaca. [*And you told me the tortilla is from Oaxaca.*]

[00:05:12]

Isela Juárez: Ah, estábamos hablando de las tlayudas. Esa es otra comida que ya después con el tiempo nosotros lo, lo fuimos introduciendo. Entonces, este, la tortilla es una tortilla grande que viene de Oaxaca. Y se dice tlayuda porque es una tortilla que, que tiene—su nombre lo dice. Entonces se presta para hacer este tipo de platillo, de prepararla de la manera en que se prepara, que es como una tostada.

[*Ah, we were talking about the tlayudas. That is another meal that after a while we, we started introducing. So, this, the tortilla is a big tortilla coming from Oaxaca. And tlayuda is said because it is a tortilla that, which has—its name says it. Then it lends itself to making this type of dish, to prepare it the way it is prepared, which is like a tostada.*]

[00:05:52]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Porque yo no, no sé tanto español, ¿por qué este nombre tlayuda significa lo grande que es? ¿Puede explicar? [*Since I don't know that much Spanish, does this name tlayuda mean how big it is? Can you explain?*]

[00:05:53]

Isela Juárez: No—tlayuda no significa lo grande sino la consistencia que no es ni suave ni duro. Está en ese término de que, tú lo doblas y no se quiebra. Mm-hmm. Ya cuando está preparada, obviamente con el calorcito se hace crujiente. Pero, ah, lo que es en Oaxaca se puede comer con comida y tú, la misma tortilla la agarras como cuchara porque no se te rompe, porque como lleva un proceso para cocerse que en Oaxaca la gente tiene sus comales y ya que una vez está cocida la tlayuda, la suben como en una vasecita y allí es donde con el puro calorcito se termina de cocinar y agarra ese, esa consistencia de tlayuda. Que es, es flexible. Uh huh. Y aquí cuando la preparas, ya con una tostada, ya es, de tanto tiempo que esté en el calorcito, se vuelve crujiente. Mm hmm. Pero eso es tlayuda.

[No—tlayuda does not mean it's big but rather the consistency that is neither soft nor hard. It is understood with that term that you bend it and it does not break. Mm-hmm. Now when it is prepared, obviously with heat it becomes crunchy. But, ah, what it is in Oaxaca can be eaten with food and you, the same tortilla you can grab as a spoon because it does not break, because as it takes a process to cook. In Oaxaca people have their comales and once the tlayuda is cooked, it is put up, like, in a little pot and that is where with pure heat it finishes cooking and obtains that, that consistency of tlayuda. That is, it is flexible. Uh, huh. And here when you prepare it, like with a tostada, is already, because of how long it is in the heat, it becomes crunchy. Mm-hmm. But that is tlayuda.]

[00:06:52]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Okay, eso sí entiendo mejor. O sea, funciona como una cuchara, un tenedor si necesitas. [*Okay, that I understand better. Or rather, it functions as a spoon, or a fork if you need it.*]

[00:07:00]

Isela Juárez: Uh huh. Porque la época de antes cuando la gente no, no estábamos en— estamos hablando de siglos atrás—no usaban la cuchara, no sabían eso, entonces ellos se le ingeniaban para poder llevar sus alimentos a la boca más que nada lo que es como caldoso.

[*Uh huh. Because before when people were not, we were not in—we're talking about centuries ago—they did not use the spoon, they did not know that, so they were (inaudible) To be able to take their food to the mouth, most of what is soupy.*]

[00:07:18]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Eso también si el, el, todo el, este, la salsita que sale de guisado y todo. [*That, too, all the, the juice that runs out of the stew and everything.*]

[00:07:24]

Isela Juárez: Mm-hmm.

[00:07:25]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Y cómo, o sea, la reacción de la gente que no es mexicana? O sea, ¿qué es la recepción del, del restaurante? [*And how, what is the reaction of people who aren't Mexican? Or rather, what is the reception of the restaurant?*]

[00:07:36]

Isela Juárez: Mucha gente, este, nosotros aquí, tratamos de explicarles cuando preguntan, con mucho gusto nosotros les damos una explicación, entonces mucha gente por curiosidad dice “Dame una.” Y ya después que la prueban, si tenemos la oportunidad, a veces por el trabajo que hay, no—Ya a veces no podemos preguntar al cliente, pero en cuanto tenemos la oportunidad, le preguntamos que “¿Qué le pareció?” Y la mayoría de la gente se irá encantada. Que es algo que nunca habían comido. Uh-huh. Y la verdad que han tenido muy buena aceptación. Bastante. Mm-hmm.

[*Many people, um, we here, we try to explain them when they ask, we gladly give them an explanation, so many people out of curiosity say "Give me one." And after they try it, if we have the opportunity, sometimes because of the job there isn't—sometimes we cannot ask the customer, but as soon as we have the opportunity, we ask him "What did you think?" And most people will be delighted. That is something they had never eaten. Uh-huh. And the truth is that we have had a very good reception. Quite. Mm-hmm.*]

[00:08:10]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y usted, ¿cómo se aprendió a cocinar? [*And you, how did you learn to cook?*]

Isela Juárez: Bueno pues, con—en la casa. Cuando uno es, es de, chamaco, allá no, no con metido en la cocina y haciendo sus burradas. Siempre comete tus errores pero, gracias a esos regaños y a todo uno va aprendiendo. Uh-huh. Los sabores, lo que lleva. Como yo digo, le digo a lo mejor cuando estaba con mi mamá, no lo hacía. Sí tenía uno el conocimiento porque uno observas, que lleva, que le pones, en que momento lo lleva. Y ya después de que venimos para acá y nos tocó y ahora sí, cocinar, pues ya lo traes todo acá. Y ahora si todo bien a la práctica. Mm-hmm.

[*Well, at home. When you are, you know, a kid, there—you alway make mistakes but thanks to those lessons and everything, you keep on learning. Uh-huh. The tastes, what's inside. As I say maybe when I was with my mom, I didn't do it. Yes, you had the knowledge because you observed, what's inside, what you add, when you add it. And after we came here and it was our turn to, you know, cook, well, you bring it all with you here. And now, everything is better with practice. Mm-hmm.*]

[00:08:52]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y acá, me puede decir porque no pueden ver que, que hizo usted. Acá ¿dónde lo trae? [*And here, can you say, because they can't see what you did. Here, where do you carry it?*]

[00:08:57]

Isela Juárez: ¿Cómo? [*What?*]

[00:08:59]

Victoria Bouloubasis: En la mente. [*In your mind.*]

[00:08:59]

Isela Juárez: Lo traigo en la mente. (*Se ríe.*) Lo traemos en la mente. [*I carry it in my mind. (Laughs.) We bring it in our minds.*]

[00:09:04]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y ustedes—cualquier persona me puede responder a eso pero ¿han pensado, como, que, lo que hacen, sí es un negocio para sobrevivir, pero también es algo que están manteniendo las tradiciones? ¿Han pensado en eso? Por—o sea, el acto de cocinar, están manteniendo una tradición que—ya están lejos pero—

[*And you all—anyone can respond to this but have you thought, like, what, what you do, yes, it is a business in order to survive, but is it also something that is maintaining traditions? Have you thought of that? By—that is, the act of cooking, they are maintaining a tradition that—you are already far away but—*]

[00:09:35]

Víctor Santiago: Obviamente que sí, es—nosotros, lo que tratamos es, este, de mantener la tradición, mantener la cultura, y mantener nuestra gastronomía. Lo que queremos hacer, darles a ver a la gente que, que vive alrededor de nosotros en nuestra ciudad o en otros, en otros lugares que nos visitan, lo que queremos es que ellos conozcan nuestra gastronomía como mexicanos y como oaxaqueños. Ah, como, se ha de dar cuenta, me imagino, Oaxaca es uno de los, este, uno de los estados más populares en cuanto a lo que es gastronomía, tradición y cultura. Entonces nosotros tratamos de enfocarnos o tratamos de proyectar eso hacia nuestros—nuestra gente, hacia, hacia la gente que no conoce de nosotros. Porque podemos hablar mucho de lo que es Oaxaca pero mucha gente no lo conoce, entonces nosotros tratamos de proyectar eso hacia nuestros hijos, que conozcan lo que es la comida auténtica oaxaqueña. Esa es nuestra, esa es nuestra idea para poder hacer, hacerles saber a nuestra gente lo que somos nosotros los oaxaqueños. Obviamente que entre otros, en otros estados también tienen sus propias culturas, su propia gastronomía, pero nosotros estamos hablando de lo que es Oaxaca.

[Obviously yes, it is—we, what we try to do is to maintain the tradition, to maintain the culture, and to maintain our gastronomy. What we want to do is let people see, living around us in our city or in other places that visit us, what we want is for them to know our gastronomy as Mexicans and as Oaxacans. Oh, like, you must realize, I imagine, Oaxaca is one of the, this, one of the most popular states in terms of its gastronomy, tradition and culture. So we try to focus or try to project that towards our people, towards people who do not know about us. Because we can talk a lot about what Oaxaca

is but many people do not know it, so we try to project that to our children, who know what authentic Oaxaca food is. That is our, that is our idea to be able to do, to let our people know what we Oaxacans are. Obviously among others, in other states also have their own cultures, their own gastronomy, but we are talking about what is Oaxaca.]

[00:10:49]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y acerca de todo eso, me puede explicar un poquito, a partir de la comida, ¿qué más, o sea, se distinta, este, la gente de Oaxaca? [*And about that, can you explain to me a little bit, aside from the food, what else is distinct about the people of Oaxaca?*]

[00:11:00]

Víctor Santiago: Mire, aparte de lo que estamos hablando de los tlayudas, nosotros, este, aquí también tenemos lo que es el mole negro, el mole rojo, el coloradito. En algunas ocasiones preparamos lo que es el amarito de pollo o de puerco, que se puede también de degustar a nuestra clientela. Nosotros—más que nada, hacemos—proyectamos nuestra comida más popular lo que se puede encontrar en Oaxaca. Porque hay, en Oaxaca hay cientos de comidas, cientos de sabores, pero lo que es más popular, nosotros tratamos de proyectar hacia nuestra gente para que ellos prueben un poquito de todo y se—y conozcan lo que es la gastronomía oaxaqueña.

[Look, apart from what we were saying about the tlayudas, we also have what is black mole, red mole, coloradito. On some occasions we prepare yellow mole of chicken or

pork, that our customers can also try. We, um, more, more than anything, we do—we project our most popular food what can be found in Oaxaca. Because there are, in Oaxaca there are hundreds of dishes, hundreds of flavors, but what is more popular, we try to project to our people so they try a little bit of everything and know what is Oaxacan gastronomy.]

[00:11:49]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y—porque es una región muy grande. Y viene de diferentes culturas indígenas, ¿no? [*Because it's a very large región. And it comes from, um, different indigenous cultures, right?*]

[00:11:56]

Víctor Santiago: Correcto. Correcto. Oaxaca tiene—es una, es uno de los estados más grandes, en cuanto a lo que es, este, lo que es la raíz indígena. O sea, hay muchísimos, este, muchísimas regiones, muchísima—varias, este, razas en lo que es Oaxaca. Somos multiculturales nosotros como oaxaqueños.

[Right. Right. Oaxaca has— it's one, it's one of the biggest states in terms of its indigenous roots. That is, there are, there are many regions, very many—several races in what is Oaxaca. We are multicultural as Oaxacans.]

[00:12:22]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y no creo que pregunté bien lo que quería decir, pero, aparte de la comida, o sea, no hablando de comida, ¿cómo se distinta la gente de Oaxaca? ¿Qué, qué cualidades tienen? [*And I don't think I asked well what I meant, that is, not speaking about food, what distinguishes the people of Oaxaca? What characteristics do they have?*]

[00:12:40]

Isela Juárez: Lo que se distingue se ha dicho, pues, que la gente es muy amable, somos personas humildes. Y pues, más que nada que somos amables con todo el mundo. (Se ríe.) [*What distinguishes us, it's been said, is that the people are very nice. We are humble people. And, well, more than anything that we're nice to everybody. (Laughs)*]

[00:12:51]

Víctor Santiago: Hospitalarios, más que nada. Somos muy hospitalarios en cuanto a eso. La gente oaxaqueña en cualquier lugar que usted vaya en lo que es el estado de Oaxaca, lo primero que la gente va a hacer es recibirlos, ofrecerles una silla, y si no tienen algo que ofrecerles, como, alguna bebida gaseosa, le ofrecen un vaso de agua, pero no le preguntan si usted quiere o no sino que ellos se lo dan, se lo ofrecen. Ya está, ah, a disposición de usted si lo acepta o no. Pero lo que es le gente oaxaqueña—si va de visita, los tratan como un rey. Así que, si usted como turista ha ido a lo que es el estado de Oaxaca, en algunas poblaciones de Oaxaca, usted es testigo de lo que la gente de

Oaxaca—somos gente muy pobre pero sí somos muy humanos, muy humildes en esa situación. Sí. En ese se distingue la gente de Oaxaca.

[Hospitable, more than anything. We are very hospitable about when it comes to that. Oaxacan people, everywhere you go in what is the state of Oaxaca, the first thing people will do is receive you, offer you a chair, and if they do not have something to offer you, like, some carbonated drink, they offer you a glass of water. But they do not ask if you want it or not, but they give it to you, they offer it. It's already, ah, available to you whether you accept it or not. But the Oaxacan people—if you visit, they treat you like a king. So, if you as a tourist have gone to the state of Oaxaca, in some towns of Oaxaca, you will witness the people of Oaxaca—we are very poor people, but we are very humble, very humble in that, in this situation. Yes. That distinguishes the people of Oaxaca.]

[00:13:48]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Yo tengo una, unas preguntas para el next generation (se ríe). ¿Les puedo, um, entrevistar en inglés o español? ¿Qué opinan? ¿Siento que es en inglés? Sure, okay, um... Who, I guess, Christopher, I want to start with you, because you said that the, you've been to Oaxaca.

[I have some, some questions for the next generation (laughs). Can I interview in English or Spanish? What do you think? I think in English? Sure, okay—who, I guess, Christopher, I want to start with you, because you said that the, you've been to Oaxaca.]

[00:14:09]

Christopher Santiago: Yeah.

[00:14:10]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Would you—were you able to go with your parents, or did you go alone?

[00:14:13]

Christopher Santiago: I've—I went with my sister and there were years when I went with my cousins, all three of them. Yeah.

[00:14:20]

Victoria Bouloubasis: When was the first time you went?

[00:14:22]

Christopher Santiago: The first time I went was maybe when I was six years old, and I actually kinda grew there. Like from kindergarten to maybe third, fourth grade. And then I came to the United States with no English at all. I was, that's why my Spanish is really good. People always comment on my Spanish, like, "Man, you speak really good Eng-Spanish." I'm like, "Yeah, because I studied in Mexico." And I also know how to read and write, so—

[00:14:45]

Victoria Bouloubasis: But were you born here?

[00:14:46]

Christopher Santiago: Yeah.

[00:14:47]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Oh, wow, so you—that’s a really interesting experience to have a bicultural—not just at home but like living in—

[00:14:53]

Christopher Santiago: Yeah, it’s really different. Like, I—the way I lived in Mexico compared to here, it’s, it’s so much like, it’s—wow, it’s just—different. Everything is different. In Mexico, it’s, it’s fun, it’s crazy, but here it’s more like, when I want—the time I was here, I used to stay at my house all the time. But when I was over there, I used to go out with my friends a lot. I had a lot of freedom over there. Which, it’s good and bad because, having a lot of freedom in Mexico can also mean, you know, doing bad things, you know. But over here is, you stay home. What can you do? You stay home.

[00:15:32]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Do you work here?

[00:15:33]

Christopher Santiago: Yeah. I work. Yeah, I work for them but not in this restaurant. I work in the one on South Boulevard.

[00:15:38]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Okay. And tell me again how old you are?

[00:15:40]

Christopher Santiago: Nineteen.

[00:15:41]

Victoria Bouloubasis: So, why do you think that this food that your parents and family are making compares, or is even better than stuff you've had in Oaxaca? Because you said that earlier.

[00:15:52]

Christopher Santiago: Yeah. Maybe it's cause, you know what they say, what they say, "Home food is better than street food?" To me, the, the food my mom makes at home is completely different from here. She makes some dishes that are just, like, where does she come up with this stuff? But, it's like, and I'm just like, it's really good food, you know, I love it, and then I go to other restaurants, you know, they supposedly call it authentic Mexican food, but their food is, like, nah—it's just like—I don't know, I guess it's cause

I'm, I'm so used to my mom's. But I can tell you, though, my mom has great skills in the, in the kitchen.

[00:16:27]

Victoria Bouloubasis: What's something you like that she makes?

[00:16:29]

Christopher Santiago: What's it—they're like little beans, I think they're called lit—
¿Cómo se llaman esos frijoles? Lent, Lint, lents—

[00:16:38]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Lentils?

[00:16:39]

Christopher Santiago: Yeah, lentils. I love her lentils, cause she puts, man, she puts bacon—sometimes she puts apple in them, pineapple. I don't know, she just, that thing's, like, amazingly good. Like, I can just tell you that. It's really good. And I love it, I love it. That's Oaxaca-style. Yeah. I love it. And that's my favorite dish, you know. And she doesn't make it for other people, and if she did, that would be a big success. I believe so. You know. I believe in my mom's cooking.

[00:17:12]

Victoria Bouloubasis: She's also sitting right next to you, no? (*Laughs*) Just kidding.

[00:17:15]

Christopher Santiago: Yeah.

[00:17:16]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Nereyda, how about you? Do you work here?

[00:17:19]

Nereyda Mali: Yes. I am here, Central Avenue.

[00:17:23]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Were you born in the States?

[00:17:24]

Nereyda Mali: Yes.

[00:17:26]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Tell me a little bit about that, about, you know, being—do you feel responsible for the restaurant?

[00:17:33]

Nereyda Mali: Yes, I have a lot of responsibility here. I do a lot. I'm in charge of waitressing here. Other people manage everyone in the kitchen also. Well, my mom does kitchen, and I do waitress. But, yes, I have full responsibility here. I love what I do. I love it. I don't know. *(Laughs)*

Victoria Bouloubasis: How busy does it get? Tell me a little bit about, like, on your busiest day, what it's, what it's like working here. How many customers are coming through?

[00:18:07]

Nereyda Mali: Customers, I can't say, but it's full. All the time. Especially weekends, as you can see. Today is Saturday, it's really full right now. Lunchtime during the week. During the week, sometimes around—the busiest we could have, say we have here is seven to nine. It's the busiest. People don't have a place to sit, people wait, they make a line. Sometimes lines go out the doors. And, and we're thankful for that. Yeah, nights sometimes. And weekends also. And we're thankful for those people that wait for their food, and I know sometimes it gets really busy at the kitchen. Orders take long, but we do our best to take their orders out quick.

[00:18:57]

Victoria Bouloubasis: What is it like for you to, have you been back to Oaxaca?

[00:19:00]

Nereyda Mali: Yes.

[00:19:01]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Okay. Did you go with your parents or with your cousins?

[00:19:05]

Nereyda Mali: My cousin, yes.

[00:19:07]

Victoria Bouloubasis: How does it feel for you, did you live there like Christopher did?

[00:19:10]

Nereyda Mali: Only for a year. That was when I was nine. I was nine. I just lived there for a year then came to Charlotte.

[00:19:17]

Victoria Bouloubasis: How does it feel for you to be able to go back and forth knowing that some people can't do that?

[00:19:24]

Nereyda Mali: Feels good. I'm happy that I can do that because, the Oaxaca food, I love it. And I miss it—now that I'm like, pregnant (*laughs*). Yes, their food, everything is the

best. And every time I go, I just try everything a little bit of everything that I can. And it's really good. Everything (*laughs*).

[00:19:47]

Victoria Bouloubasis: How do you all source your products? Do you, do you know? Like if the queso oaxaqueño, where do you get it from?

[00:19:55]

Nereyda Mali: Oaxaca. They actually bring the, the quesillo, it's from Oaxaca. And the tlayuda, the tortilla from Oaxaca also. So we don't make that here, the tortilla. Everything's from Oaxaca. Yes.

[00:20:09]

Victoria Bouloubasis: But do you make the tortillas for the tacos?

[00:20:12]

Nereyda Mali: Yes, we make that here. I can do tortillas also.

[00:20:15]

Victoria Bouloubasis: I was going to ask you, do you cook, too?

[00:20:16]

Nereyda Mali: Yes! I can make tortillas. Actually my aunt was the one that taught me when we were at the, um, the mobile truck. At the food truck. Yes. That's how I learned.

[00:20:28]

Victoria Bouloubasis: So, are you or even Christopher, are you all going to take over the business, or do you have other plans for the future?

[00:20:35]

Nereyda Mali: We do plan on opening more and—on our own also, but with them also.

[00:20:45]

Victoria Bouloubasis: And there are two locations now?

[00:20:47]

Nereyda Mali: Yes.

[00:20:48]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Three? Christopher said—

[00:20:50]

Nereyda Mali: We do have another location in Florida.

[00:20:53]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Oh, wow.

[00:20:53]

Nereyda Mali: And it's actually La Oaxaqueña.

[00:20:55]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Who runs that one?

[00:20:57]

Nereyda Mali: Our, my—it's us, but my cousin Ana, Christopher's sister. She's there right now.

Christopher Santiago: She's like the next generation because she's taken over there.

[00:21:09]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Can you tell me a little bit about the American clientele and what they prefer versus what the Mexican clientele prefers?

[00:21:18]

Nereyda Mali: Yes. They love the tacos. They're always the best. They're—yeah. They always say the tacos are the best. The best in Charlotte. Yeah, we always get really good reviews from them on social media also. A lot from them. Really good.

[00:21:35]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Do you have social media accounts?

[00:21:38]

Nereyda Mali: Yes.

[00:21:38]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Who runs them?

[00:21:39]

Nereyda Mali: Usually Victor, my uncle Victor. He's the one that manages that.

(Laughs).

[00:21:47]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Víctor, ¿me puedes explicar de nuevo de los premios que han ganado? [*Victor, can you explain to me again the awards that you all have won?*]

[00:21:55]

Víctor Santiago: Es de, esto más que nada, lo que es el, eh, los premios que nos han dado en estos últimos dos años, como el "Charlotte: The Best of the Best." Es uno de los, una de las revistas que califica los restaurantes, los mejores restaurantes en Charlotte. Y en esto, en estos dos últimos años, hemos ocupado el primer lugar como la mejor taquería. No como el mejor restaurante sino como la mejor taquería. Para, este, los—aquí

hay una persona que viene a, a ver lo que hacemos aprobar lo que hacemos y, pues, de esto se llevan esto, hacia, a sus oficinas se puede decir, porque de igual manera nosotros no conocemos a las personas que han hecho este tipo de, de reconocimientos. Sino que esto es como una ¿se puede decir, una persona en incógnito, viene aquí a probar, a ver que lo que hacemos y éste ya lo califica. Entonces en estos dos años, hemos ocupado el primer lugar. Y en otra revista hemos ocupado otro lugar también. O sea, hemos estado reconocidos como, como la mejor taquería mexicana en Charlotte porque muchas taquerías son—obviamente que son mexicanos pero son, ¿cómo se puede decir? No tan auténticos como lo es Tacos El Nevado.

[This, more than anything else, is what the awards we have been given over the last two years, like "Charlotte: The Best of the Best." It is one of the magazines that judges restaurants, the best restaurants in Charlotte. And in these last two years, we have occupied the first place as the best taqueria. Not as the best restaurant but as the best taqueria. So, there is a person who comes to, to see what we do, evaluate what we do and, from this they take this, to their, their office you could say, because we don't even know the people who have given this kind of recognition. But this is like a—you could say, a person incognito, who comes here to prove, to see that what we do and this person judges it. So in these two years, we have occupied the first place. And in another magazine we have taken another place too. That is, we have been recognized as, the best Mexican taqueria in Charlotte because many taquerias are—obviously they are Mexican but they are, how can you say it? Not as authentic as Tacos El Nevado.]

[00:23:14]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Cuántas taquerías hay en Charlotte? ¿Saben? [*How many taquerías are there in Charlotte? Do you know?*]

[00:23:16]

Víctor Santiago: Yo creo que hay muchísimos, como más de cien taquerías. Hay muchas, muchas taquerías pero igual como le digo, nosotros como, nosotros—Tacos El Nevado es una de las taquerías más reconocidas aquí en Charlotte.

[*I think there are a lot, like more than a hundred taquerias. There are many, many taquerias but just as I say, we—Tacos El Nevado is one of the most renowned taquerias here in Charlotte.*]

[00:23:34]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Okay, Víctor, entonces, ahora que el, el clima políticamente es un poco este, incierto y tenso y todo ¿me puede explicar usted como se siente? ¿Y cómo se siente la comunidad aquí en Charlotte?

[*Okay, Víctor, so, now that the political climate is a little uncertain and tense and everything, can you explain how you feel? And how the community in Charlotte feels?*]

[00:23:50]

Víctor Santiago: Pues, yo creo que hablando de lo que es el sistema migratorio, ahorita mucha gente este atemorizada, mucha gente tiene miedo de separarse las familias y nosotros les entendemos porque igual nosotros somos inmigrantes. Pero—nosotros siempre hemos pensado de que siempre hay que poner nuestras vidas en la mano de Dios y que esto, esto va a pasar porque ya está sucediendo. Solamente que no hay que tenerle mucho temor a esto, hay que cuidarnos, hay que, uh, hacer las cosas como deben de ser. Si el día que nos toca que pues ya que podemos hacer, o sea, va a ser el, la suerte de cada quien pero igual nosotros también apoyamos a lo que es el—a nuestra comunidad. Porque nosotros en este, el mes pasado, el dieciséis de septiembre cuando se invocó a una, este, a un paro laboral, nosotros cerramos nuestros establecimientos. Todos nuestros establecimientos estaban cerrados por apoyo a nuestra comunidad porque nosotros como inmigrantes y como mexicanos nos sentimos identificado con toda la gente inmigrante que está en este país. No no más porque seamos negocios sino que es, es un acto de solidaridad para todos.

[Well, I think that talking about the immigration system, now many people are frightened, many people are afraid of separating families and we understand them because we are immigrants too. But—we have always thought that we must always put our lives in the hand of God and that this, this is going to happen because it is already happening. Only you do not have to be very afraid of this, you have to take care of yourself, you have to do things as they should be done. If the day comes that it's our turn, because it can happen, that is, it will be the, the fate of each one but equally we also support what is the—our

community. Because we in this, last month, the sixteenth of September when there was a, a labor strike, we closed our establishments. All our establishments were closed in support of our community because we as immigrants and as Mexicans identify with all the immigrant people who are in this country. Not only because we are business, but it is, it is an act of solidarity for all.]

[00:25:10]

Victoria Isela, *do you have anything to add to that?* **Bouloubasis**: Isela, ¿tiene algo para agregar a eso? [

[00:25:18]

Isela Juárez: (Se ríe) ¿Qué será? No, pues que igual vea que estamos allí, este—saliendo cada día, pues, hacer lo que nos gusta hacer y pues, puede ser—que pase lo que tiene que pasar. Y pues, no vamos si—la mala suerte que nos toca el tener que irnos, pues, allí se quedan ellos con el negocio (se ríe) Seguir contribuyendo. Y sí, no se qué otra cosa.

[(Laughs) What would it be? No, you know, just see that we are there—going out every day, you know, doing what we like to do and then—whatever happens will happen. And then, we'll go—if unfortunately we have to leave, well, they're stay here with the business. (Laughs) Continue contributing. And yes, I do not know what else.]

[00:25:41]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Vianey, ¿usted? [*Vianey, you?*]

[00:25:43]

Vianey Juárez: Pues igual, seguir adelante, trabajar. Así, como dice ella, si nos toca, tenemos que irnos, pero seguir adelante, seguir adelante. [*The same. Keep on going. Work. Just like she said, if it's our turn, we have to leave, but keep going, keep going.*]

[00:25:53]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y usted cocina con su hermana aquí. [*And you cook with your sister here.*]

[00:25:55]

Vianey Juárez: Sí. Bueno ella, como está en los otros restaurantes y yo acá, pero sí. [*Yes. Well, she is in the other restaurants and I'm here, but yes.*]

[00:25:59]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Okay. ¿Están manejando todo las mujeres? [*Okay. Women are running everything?*]

[00:26:04]

Vianey Juárez: Sí. [*Yes.*]

[00:26:06]

Victoria Bouloubasis: How about you guys? When you guys are talking to people your age—what do people feel about the current political climate and—are there fears? Or, are

you thinking about the future like how it, you're going to get things in order? I mean, how—

[00:26:22]

Nereyda Mali: We do think about it. But it's hard. But like, like my aunt said, it's us, next generation who'll take over. And we've been here—since I was thirteen. We know everything. We know everything from here and I know we can do it. If day after tomorrow they said they have to go, me, Ana, Christopher, everyone, all of us can take over. (*Crying*)

[00:26:58]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Do you have anything to add to that Christopher?

[00:27:00]

Christopher Santiago: Well, we are their kids and we're here for them. You know, just like they were there for us when we were young, we're here for them. Because, it's something, we're not gonna let nobody break, you know, you know, this is their years of hard work, you know, and in this business they gave us everything that we have and we not gonna let nobody break it down, you know? It's—and we're gonna work—

[00:27:25]

Nereyda Mali: We grew up here.

[00:27:26]

Christopher Santiago: Yep.

[00:27:27]

Nereyda Mali: We grew up here. And like I said, I'm full responsible for everything, so—I know everything. The kitchen, everything. So there's no saying that if they're—they leave, it's not like saying Tacos El Nevado is gone. No. Because we're here.

[00:27:42]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Do you feel supported by the community in Charlotte?

[00:27:46]

Nereyda Mali: Yes. Yes, we do. Yeah, because we, we do well here. Especially our customers. They, they prefer us.

[00:27:56]

Christopher Santiago: Well, they, we've given them our, you know, every time we serve a client, you know, we give them our best hospitality. We, we never say, we never give them attitudes about this and that part, you know? At least not me, you know, cause I'm a cashier over there by South Boulevard and every client that comes in, I greet, I welcome them, I say hi to them, I never deny, you know, a welcome. Because everybody is welcome here in my restaurant. And I, and I think that also has made us who we are because they see us all the time, "Oh, hey!" like, like if they know us. And then that's just

an amazing feeling cause, like, you don't even know them but it's like, they know you. And you know them because they're your client, so you don't even have to know them to know them, you know? And that's, that's why they, they prefer us over other restaurants, you know? Because other restaurants, they have, they hire other people to do that job. And, you know, on their bad days, they're just gonna give an attitude to—who cares because it's not theirs. So they don't know how it feels when you lose a client. Cause when we lose a client, we losing. Right now, with all this going on, you know like you said, political reasons, when you don't see a client, it affects you. Because that person can be somebody who comes here once in a blue moon or comes here everyday, and you'll still, it'll still impact your restaurant. Because it's one less face you'll see, and one less, one face, one less face you'll greet. And it, it really does hurt, you know. Cause you're like, "Oh, what happened to him?" You, you keep, you—it stays on your mind, like "Oh, I wonder what happened to him." And you couldn't, you never know because like I said, you know them, but you don't. So it really does impact you, this um, right... what's going on right now. It's real and it's happening now and it's happening, like, at this exact second, you know? The moment you're hearing this, there's somewhere in this, in this big country, somebody's getting their families taken or their kids, because there's even little kids who are not legally here. So it's not just adults. It's from, kids from newborns to, to elder people who are getting affected by what's going on in today's world. So it does affect us and we just want, you know, that—we have, we know that we have their support and we have their support. We—they have our support and we have theirs. So I don't know how to explain—like that (*laughs*) You know.

[00:30:28]

Victoria Bouloubasis: No, that's very true and powerful like you're saying it's the moment that we're living in and you can't ignore it, even if you're not consciously thinking about it, it's there.

[00:30:39]

Christopher Santiago: Yeah it is there. It's happening now, but like they said, it's gonna come, it's gonna take over families, but we're still gonna be here. And we're still gonna live through it. And it's just gonna be—it's just, right now it's just an obstacle. And we, in order for us to keep on going we have to go through these obstacles. And that's what God puts through sometimes, you know. Obstacles. You just have to be strong. And, you know, go through.

[00:31:12]

Victoria Bouloubasis: To end on a maybe happier note, I guess, Nereyda, now that you're pregnant—you said you were eight months pregnant?

[00:31:20]

Nereyda Mali: Yes.

[00:31:21]

Victoria Bouloubasis: What would you recommend a pregnant woman eat at El Nevado? What are you craving?

[00:31:26]

Nereyda Mali: Oh, I crave everything. Honestly, I eat really good. I especially will, even before pregnant, I'll eat everything, but I eat the chicken tacos. The way I prepare them. Cause, cause, we don't, that's—if the customer asks for it, we'll prepare them as the customer prefers. But the way I prepare them, the chicken tacos with the lettuce, sour cream, I like all of that. I know it's not authentic, but it's something that I crave and, yeah, or the quesadillas. We just put, we usually for the quesadillas we put the salad on the side, but on mine, I put everything inside. It's the, yeah, it's the best.

Christopher Santiago: The choco-flan, too

Nereyda Mali: The choco-flan, a dessert. There's a choco-flan. We have flan, but you know, we have everything. I actually eat everything here.

[00:32:18]

Victoria Bouloubasis: What are things that—eso sí puede ser una pregunta para todos quizás solo para los más jóvenes, pero ¿qué es algo un platillo que, es auténtico pero ustedes lo hacen más como, de la influencia de estar aquí? O sea, you make it like fusion American or something? Like, you put sour cream on your tacos, like, what else do you do that you maybe kind of supe it up your way?

[What are things that, this can be a question for everyone, perhaps only for the younger ones, but what is something, a dish that, is authentic but you make it more like, influenced

by being here? That is, you make it like fusion American or something? Like, you put sour cream on your tacos, like, what else do you do that you maybe kind of supe it up your way?]

[00:32:47]

Christopher Santiago: El taco salad, el—¿cómo este se llama? El shell tacos—este—lo que son los burritos. O sea— [*The taco salad, the—what is that one called? The shell tacos—the burritos. Or rather—*]

[00:32:58]

Isela Juarez: Lleva cheese dip encima. [*They have cheese dip on top.*]

[00:32:59]

Victoria Bouloubasis:¿El qué? [*They have what?*]

[00:33:00]

Isela Juarez: El cheese dip. El queso derretido. [*Cheese dip. El queso derretido.*]

[00:33:03]

Victoria Bouloubasis:¿Cómo se llama este platillo? [*What's that dish called?*]

[00:33:05]

Isela Juarez: Burrito—fajita burrito.

[00:33:07]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Y está en el menú? [*And it's on the menu?*]

[00:33:08]

Isela Juarez: Uh-huh. El de allá de South Boulevard. El menú de South Boulevard es un poco más extenso porque el local es más grande. [*Uh-huh. The one over on South Boulevard. The menu on South Boulevard is a little more extensive because the location is bigger.*]

[00:33:15]

Christopher: It's a restaurant. You know, this one is, like he said, it was a taquería. Over there, like I said, they, they do offer a lot more stuff. Yeah, and you'll like it. And you can actually stay there. And like, here they have the tables, so everything is set up, you know, exactly the same. Just the food is, the menu is more, more extended, you know it has more stuff in it.

[00:33:36]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Por qué hicieron un menú más extenso? ¿Fue para los gringos o querían hacerlo para ustedes? Porque este queso dip no es de Oaxaca. [*Why did you make a more extensive menu? Was it for the gringos or did you want to do it for yourselves? Because cheese dip is not from Oaxaca.*]

[00:33:47]

Isela Juarez: No. (Se ríe) Sí, es de, como allí es el local más grande entonces hay más espacio. Entonces quisiéramos meter un poco más de platillos. Tenemos los mariscos como el camarón a la diablo, empanizados, caldo de camarón, mojarras fritas, carne asada—Y ahorita nos caracterizaos mucho allá porque tenemos, en las horas de lonche, hacemos tres comidas, como, caseras, para los lonches entonces ya la gente sabe y llegan muchos grupos de la construcción a degustar y a aprender “Ah, ¿Cuál es el especial de hoy?” Y ya. Es de—

[No. (Laughs.) Yes, um, since that is the largest location, there is more space. so—a few more dishes. We have seafood like the deviled shrimp, breaded shrimp, eh, shrimp soup, fried fish, carne asada ... And now we stand out a lot there because we have, at lunchtime, we make three meals, like, homemade, for lunch. And people already know and many groups of construction workers come to try it and find out "Ah, what is the special today?" And that's it.]

[00:34:28]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿Y cuánto cuesta un platillo así? *[And how much do those plate lunches cost?]*

[00:34:30]

Isela Juarez: Entre \$8.50 y \$8.99. Porque es bastante. Lleva arroz, frijol, ensalada y—
[Between \$8.50 y \$8.99. Because it's a lot. It comes with rice, beans, a salad—]

[00:34:36]

Víctor Santiago: Es un, este, es un platillo especial, no es un especial del día. O sea, es un, ¿cómo se puede decir? Nosotros al decir especial del día es porque es una comida diferente a los otros días. Y, y no es como, como en otros restaurantes que dice ‘Especial: \$6.99’ todo el tiempo. ¿Sí, me explico?

[It’s a special plate, not a daily special. Or rather, it’s a—how would you say this? When we call it a daily special, it’s because it’s a different food each day. And, and, it’s not like how, how in other restaurants, they say, “Special: \$6.99 all the time.” Does that make sense?]

[00:35:00]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Sí porque, lo hacen al momento. *[Yes, because it’s not just at that time.]*

[00:35:02]

Víctor Santiago: Al momento pero no es, no es una, una comida que está en especial sino que es una comida especial del día. Entonces no es el precio, uh-huh, sino que, es una comida que hoy lo comes hasta la otra semana vuelves a comerlo otra vez, otra semana igual, pero no es—o sea, se cambia la comida diariamente, como los cinco días de la semana se cambia la comida. Hoy es mole, mañana es caldo de res, pasado es fajitas, el otro día es caldo de pollo—O sea, se cambian las tres comidas constantemente, o sea, todos los días.

[At that time but it's not, it's not a food that's on special, but rather it's the daily special. So it's not the price. Instead it's a dish that today you eat it, next week you come back to eat it again, the next week, same thing. But it's not—or rather, the dish changes daily, like five days a week, the dish changes. Today it's mole, tomorrow it's beef stew, later it's fajitas, another day it's chicken soup. So, the three dishes change constantly, or rather, everyday.]

[00:35:38]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Así hacen en México, ¿no? *[They do that in Mexico, don't they?]*

[00:35:39]

Víctor Santiago: Mm-hmm. Esa es como la comida corrida, que le dicen en México.

[Mm-hmm. That's like the comida corrida, they call it in Mexico.]

[00:35:42]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿O las fondas? *[Or diners?]*

[00:35:43]

Víctor Santiago: Exactamente. Hacia ese estilo estamos trabajando nosotros. *[Exactly.*

We're working toward that model.]

[00:35:47]

(female) Los lonches.

[00:35:48]

(male) Los lonches. [*Lunch.*]

[00:35:49]

Isela Juarez: Yeah.

[00:35:49]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Entonces ‘lonche’ es una palabra, ¿viene de México o de acá? [*So ‘lonche’ is a word that comes from Mexico or from here?*]

[00:35:54]

Víctor Santiago: No, es de aquí pero el, como todo el mundo decimos “Vamos a lunch.” Es la hora de la comida. La hora de la comida que es a las, a las doce del día. Uh-huh, y nosotros, pues, para nosotros es la comida del día. Entonces no es, es un platillo fuerte para todos. Uh-huh, es un platillo fuerte para todos, por eso es que nosotros. Aquí, nosotros pues, es típicamente aquí en Estados Unidos se dice ‘lunch.’ En dondequiera que vayas, “Vamonos a lunch” porque es a las doce. Pero, no es porque uno diga ‘lonche’— para aquí, creo que ‘lonche’ es por todas las veces que comes pero aquí nosotros específicamente como mexicanos, como latinos, dices ‘la comida del día.’ La comida, el almuerzo, la comida, la cena, y los demás.

[No, it's from here but, like everyone says "Let's go to lunch." It's lunch time. The meal time is at 12 noon. Uh-huh, and we, for us, it's the meal of the day. So it's not—it's a

filling dish for everyone. Uh-huh, it's a filling dish for all, that's why we, here, it is typically here in the United States that we say 'lunch'. Wherever you go, "Let's go to lunch" because it's twelve o'clock. But, it's not because one says 'lunch'—for here, I think 'lunch' is for all the times you eat but here we specifically as Mexicans, as Latinos, you say 'the meal of the day.' Lunch, breakfast, lunch, dinner, and, and the others.]

[00:36:35]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Y aquí en el negocio, como me explicaba, ¿más o menos es un, es fuerte por los trabajadores? ¿O las embarazadas? (Se ríen todos) Pero ¿sí? [*And here in your business, like you were explaining, it's more or less filling for the workers? Or the pregnant women? (Everyone laughs.) Right?*]

[00:36:46]

Isela Juarez: Sí. Uh-huh, tratamos de que, este, como pues, los—la mayoría de nuestra clientela es gente que trabaje en construcción, trabajos pesados, entonces tratamos de, de hacer una comida que está ¿?? darles fuerzas para continuar el día. Uh-huh. Para terminar la jornada. Entonces siempre viene con frijolitos o arroz y tortillas. Uh-huh. Y sus agüitas frescas de, de frutas naturales.

[*Yes. Uh-huh, We try to, the— most of our clientele are people who work in construction, heavy jobs, so we try to, make a meal that is—to give them strength to continue the day. Uh-huh. To finish the day. Then it always comes with beans or rice and tortillas. Uh-huh. And flavored water with fresh, natural fruit.*]

[00:37:16]

Víctor Santiago: Sí, es de pura fruta natural. No usamos, este, colorantes o, o, o este, sabores, saborizantes como se dice en otros lados, que es—como por ejemplo aquí la horchata, no sé si usted ha probado la horchata en México o aquí. La horchata es con el arroz natural. Se hace natural. Porque hay también de, de sobres que eso si sabe es muy feo. Aunque nosotros somos mexicanos dicen, dicen es horchata, pero no es lo mismo, es algo muy diferente a lo que nosotros hacemos. Es natural cien por ciento. Lo que es las aguas, como por ejemplo, el agua de sandía, nosotros compramos la fruta y la hacemos. El agua tamarindo—compramos el tamarindo y hacemos el agua tamarindo. El, la jamaica también, la naranja también, o sea, todos es natural. Nosotros no vendemos—aguas como, en otros locales, no, que el Pepsi, Coca, y con revuelto con agua y quién sabe qué—no, nosotros tratamos de ser más natural y nuestra gente también ya sabe. ¿Cuánto cuesta tanto? Hay algunas personas que sí nos dice, “Pero, ¿por qué tan caro?” Sí porque esto es natural. No te estoy dando una bebida artificial donde yo, ahorita le he hecho agua y le hecho y pun, ya. No, es algo natural que, al probarlo tú lo vas a sentir la textura de, del agua. Entonces, es lo que nosotros hacemos. Tratamos de hacer nuestra comida al cien por ciento natural. Nosotros no usamos artificiales para nada.

[Yes, it is pure natural fruit. We do not use, this, coloring or flavors, flavorings as you say, like other places, that is—for example here the horchata, I do not know if you have tried the horchata in Mexico or here. The horchata is with natural rice. It becomes natural. Because there are also those from envelopes that, you know, is very gross. Although we are Mexican, they say, it is horchata, but it is not the same, it is something

very different from what we do. Ours is natural one hundred percent. It's juice, such as watermelon, we buy the fruit and we make it. The tamarind water—we buy the tamarind and make the tamarind water. The, the Jamaica too, the orange too, that is, all is natural. We do not sell—waters like, in other places, no, we—Pepsi, Coca, and mixed up with water and who knows what—no, we try to be more natural and our people know that already. How much does it cost? There are some people who do tell us, "But why so expensive?" Yes, because this is natural. I'm not giving you an, an artificial drink—I've made you water and made you—no, it is natural that when you try it, you will feel the texture of the water. So, it's what we do. We try to make our food 100 percent natural. We do not use artificial ingredients at all.]

[00:38:43]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Para que sabe de la fruta, no del azúcar. [*So it's water from fruit, not from sugar.*]

[00:38:46]

Víctor Santiago: Correcto. Así es. [*Correct. That's what it is.*]

[00:38:48]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Bueno, lo siento por hacerle llorar. [*Well, I'm sorry for making you cry.*]

Víctor Santiago: No, no te preocupes. Es algo, es algo muy bonito porque nosotros remontamos a una historia. ¿Me entiende? Llegamos aquí a este país con una mano por enfrente y otra mano por atrás como todo inmigrante. Pero, nuestra, nuestra llegada a este país a la mejor, uh, no era de llegar a hacer lo que estamos haciendo en este momento. Llegamos a, a, a trabajar como en lo que es, en lo que, en lo que encuentres. Nosotros, todos nosotros venimos de una, de una familia muy, de muy escasos recursos. Llegamos a este país, trabajamos en lo que es, en, en lo que es, en los campos, en la agricultura de lo, del estado de la Florida, que donde se levanta, se recoge calabaza, pepino, tomate, frijol verde, eh... todo eso. Entonces nosotros salimos de ese, de, de esa, de ese trabajo porque por cinco años trabajamos en ese trabajo. Uh-huh, hasta que empezamos a, a pensar un poquito más, o sea, de nuestra familia, de mejorar nuestro empleo, de mejorar... de encontrar otro trabajo donde te paguen un poco mejor. Y así, uh, afortunadamente nosotros llegamos a este país y durante veinticinco años que llevamos viviendo en este país solamente hemos tenido cuatro trabajos hasta hoy con esto. Cuatro trabajos.

[No, do not worry. It's something, it's very nice because we went back to a story. Do you get me? We arrived here to this country with one hand in front and another hand behind like any immigrant. But, our, our arrival in this country at best, uh, was not to get to do what we are doing now. We came to, to, to work in what, in what, in what you find. We, all of us come from a family with very few, very few resources. We came to this country, we worked in what is, in, in, in the fields, in agriculture in the state of Florida, where we picked squash, cucumber, tomato, green beans, eh ... all that. So we left that, that, that,

that work because for five years we did that work. Uh-huh, until we started to think a little more, that is, about our family, to improve our jobs, to improve ... to find another job where they pay you a little better. And so, uh, fortunately we arrived in this country and for the twenty-five years we've been living in this country, we've only had four jobs to date with this one. Four jobs.]

[00:40:18]

Victoria: El de campo, ¿qué más? [*The one in the fields, what else?*]

[00:40:20]

Víctor Santiago: El de campo, bueno, mi esposa y yo empezamos en el campo. Lo que es el la rama del campo. Después yo, yo me metí a trabajar en una, en una ferretería en un lumber por cinco, seis años. Entonces, ya, allí después empezamos otra vez, ah, de nuevo y cuando llegamos aquí, yo me metí a trabajar en construcción y de allí fue donde nació este, esta oportunidad de, de hacer el trabajo de restaurante, o sea, por eso nosotros no hemos tenido tantos trabajos sino que hemos, hemos... en un trabajo que hemos encontrado lo hemos trabajado por varios años, otro trabajo por otros varios años, hasta llegar a donde estamos en este momento.

[The fields, well, my wife and I started in the fields. What is the, the branch of field labor. Then I, I went to work in a, in a lumber hardware store for five, six years. So, there, we started there again, ah, again, and when we got here, I went to work in construction and that's where this was born, this opportunity to do restaurant work, that is, for that reason

we have not had so many jobs, but we have ... in each job that we have found we have worked for several years, another job for several years, until we get to where we are at the moment.]

[00:41:04]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Pues, les tocó la suerte, creo, aquí, ¿no? Con el restaurante. [*Well, you've had good luck here, I think, no?*]

[00:41:09]

Víctor Santiago: Afortunadamente, sí. Afortunadamente, sí, yo agradezco muchísimo a la persona que nos dio la oportunidad de hacerlo porque de igual manera también la oportunidad es una cosa, el conocimiento es otra cosa. Porque puede, cualquier persona, te de una oportunidad pero si no sabes hacerlo, nunca lo vas a poder hacer. Y gracias a la familia, a toda la familia que nos echamos la mano, empezamos a trabajar en conjunto, y, y levantamos este negocio por, ya llevamos como ocho, nueve años en este negocio. Y, y es, no, donde nosotros estamos echando, uh, más empeño para seguir fortaleciendo el negocio y, como dijo Nereyda hace un rato, nuestra meta es abrir más locales, más locales, más locales. Y no no más aquí en Charlotte sino yo ya me quiero ir a otras ciudades, a otros estados. Ahorita estamos en la Florida, uh, con otro. Pero igual, yo quiero ir a otros lugares. Sí, si nuestro gobierno nos da la oportunidad de seguir porque nosotros, como inmigrantes, eh, mucha gente no quiere reconocer que nosotros venimos a trabajar.

[Fortunately, yes. Fortunately, yes, I am very grateful to the person who gave us the opportunity to do it because likewise opportunity is also one thing, knowledge is something else. Because someone can, anyone can give you a chance but if you do not know how to do it, you'll never be able to do it. And thanks to the family, the whole family that extended their hand to us, we started to work together, and, and we raised this business for, we already have eight, nine years in this business. And, and it is, no, where we are putting, uh, more effort to continue strengthening the business and, as Nereyda said a while ago, our goal is to open more locations, more locations, more locations. And not just here in Charlotte but I already want to go to other cities, to other states. Right now we're in Florida, uh, with another. But anyway, I want to go to other places. Yes, if our government gives us the opportunity to continue because we as immigrants, uh, a lot of people do not want to acknowledge that we come to work.]

Isela Juarez: Aportar. *[To contribute.]*

Víctor Santiago: Aportar. Estamos aportando, nosotros estamos pagando taxes desde que llegamos a este país. Y lamentablemente el gobierno no quiere reconocer que nosotros aportamos. Ahorita la gente indocumentada es la gente que más aporta y, y es la gente que menos recibe sus taxes, sus impuestos. Entonces, eso es lo que el gobierno no quiere ver. Pero nosotros venimos aquí a, a trabajar. Mis hijos nacieron aquí. Gracias a Dios, yo al gobierno no le debo un solo centavo de ayuda porque nunca me pare en sus oficinas para pedir un, una ayuda de soporte económico. Nunca. Nunca. Así que yo no, no le temo nada, a nadie, porque si me, si al rato me agarra inmigración y me trata de

hacer alguna deportado o cualquier, tengo mi derecho de poder pelear mi caso porque no le debo nada al gobierno. Al contrario, estamos aportando y aparte de eso, estamos, ah, manteniendo a mucha familia porque nosotros con nuestros negocios tenemos muchísimos empleados. Que esa, esa gente vive, vive con su sueldo y el trabajo que ellos están haciendo. Y si el día de mañana llegamos a, a, a, a lo que es la irnos a la quiebra, pues todos nuestros empleados se van a quedar afuera. Entonces, ¿donde queda esa familia? Solo nosotros queremos que nuestra familia, todos nuestros empleados seamos un equipo, seamos una familia y trabajar todos juntos porque de aquí mantenemos a nuestras familias. Eso es lo que a veces mucha gente desgraciada-, eh, desafortunadamente no quieren reconocer las aportaciones que hacemos nosotros como los inmigrantes. Nosotros como inmigrantes somos el apoyo económico muy fuerte en este país.

[To contribute. We are contributing, we have been paying taxes since we arrived in this country. And unfortunately the government does not want to acknowledge that we contribute. Right now undocumented people are the people who contribute the most, and it's the people who get their taxes, their taxes. So that's what the government does not want to see. But we come here to work. My children were born here. Thank God, I do not owe the government a penny of help because I never stepped into their offices to ask for any economic support. Never. Never. So I do not, I'm not afraid of anything, anybody, because if I, if after a while immigration grabs me and tries to do some deportation or any, I have my right to fight my case because I owe nothing to the government. On the contrary, we are contributing and besides that, we are, ah, maintaining a lot of family

because we with our businesses have many employees. These, these people live, live with their salary and the work that they are doing. And if tomorrow we come to, to, to, to go bankrupt, all our employees are going to be left out in the cold. So where is that family? Only we want our family, all our employees to be a team, to be a family and work together because from here we take care of our families. That is what sometimes many people sadly and unfortunately do not want to recognize—the contributions that we make as immigrants. We as immigrants are a very strong economic support in this country.]

[00:43:58]

Isela Juarez: (inescuchable)—tenemos aproximadamente treinta empleados, incluyendo a nosotros. [(Inaudible)—*we have about thirty employees, including ourselves.*]

[00:44:03]

Victoria Bouloubasis: ¿De familia todos? [*All family members?*]

[00:44:04]

Isela Juarez: No, no. Gente que empleamos para trabajar. En los dos negocios, como los treinta. Y en Florida, están como doce. [*No, no. People who— to work. In the two businesses, about thirty. And in Florida, there are about twelve.*]

[00:44:12]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Eso es también un apoyo para la comunidad. [*That, too, is a support for the community.*]

[00:44:14]

Isela Juarez: Mm-hmm. Y todos los taxes que se pagan mes con mes porque aquí no perdona, los taxes no perdonan, mes con mes están. Y entonces, sí, pues, estamos aquí colaborando, aportando a la economía. Poquito, pero algo.

[Mm-hmm. And all the taxes that are paid month by month because here there are not forgiven, the taxes are unrelenting, month by month they are there. And then, yes, then, we are here collaborating, contributing to the economy. A little, but something.]

[00:44:35]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Pues, mucho. Yo digo mucho. Okay. Pues, gracias. ¿Quieren agregar algo? *[Well, a lot. I think, a lot. Okay. Well, thank you. Would you like to add anything?]*

Víctor Santiago: Pues, yo solamente lo que yo pido es que la gente que estamos en este país como inmigrantes, nos enfoquemos a seguir trabajando. Aportar a este país y a, y a respetar las leyes como debe de hacer. Y también me gustaría invitar a la gente que a lo mejor en un momento están en, en una situación muy difícil, que le echen ganas y a seguir adelante porque este país te da mucho. Solamente que nosotros no lo sabemos aprovechar. Eso es lo único. Es una bendición estar en este país y gracias a este país nosotros estamos soportando a nuestra familia, estamos apoyando a otras familias, y el trabajo que nosotros estamos haciendo. Por no por eso no vamos a, a, a rendir. Vamos a echarle más ganas y vamos a seguir adelante. Y gracias a usted por tomarse el tiempo y

querer venir a, a hacer una historia con nosotros, a preguntar sobre nuestra, nuestros inicios, sobre nuestros orígenes y todo eso. Pues, le agradezco mucho que estén ustedes aquí y, y pues, bendiciones para todos.

[Well, I just ask that the people that are in this country as immigrants, that we focus and continue working. To contribute to this country and to, and to respect the laws as they should be respected. And I would also like to invite people that maybe at some moment they are in, in a very difficult situation, that they do what it takes and keep going forward, because this country gives you a lot. Only we do not know how to take advantage of it. That is the only thing. It is a blessing to be in this country and thanks to this country we are supporting our family, we are supporting other families, and the work we are doing. So we are not going to, to, to surrender. We're going to give it more and we're going to keep going. And thanks to you for taking the time and wanting to come to, to make a story with us, to ask about our, our beginnings, about our origins and all that. Well, I thank you very much that you are here and, and, well, blessings for all.]

[00:45:51]

Victoria Bouloubasis: Gracias a ustedes. El placer es mío y, sí, gracias. *[Thank you all. The pleasure is mine. And, yes, thank you.]*

[END INTERVIEW]