

Transcript of Interview with Layla Rhodes

Interview conducted by Natalie Rosales at Fort Steilacoom Park, on 5/17/2023

Notes

NR:	OK, so my name is Natalie, It's 5/17/2023 and I'm here with Layla Rhodes. She's my friend. Introduce yourself.	
LR:	My name is Layla Rhodes.	
NR:	OK, so..	
LR:	That's pretty much all I have as an introduction for myself.	
NR:	First question is how long have you lived in Washington?	
LR:	Ummm, so I've been here since I was two, so I'm like, I'm 17 now. Soo... 15 years.	
NR:	Close enough.	
LR:	I don't know how to do math.	
NR:	Uhh, where were you originally born?	
LR:	I was born in North Las Vegas, Nevada.	
NR:	How was that? Like, do you remember anything?	
LR:	I really don't, but from what I hear like, it wasn't the best upbringing because my parents were really young and they've gone through some struggles.	
NR:	Can you tell me more about that?	
LR:	Umm, I don't really know much about my parents because they- they weren't really together around the time- for a lot of my life, you know? Umm but I do know like the struggles that my family uh had was like, a lot of drug use umm, and just like general poverty because we- both sides of my family aren't really well off.	
NR:	Um have they always lived in Washington?	
LR:	Um so, a lot of my family's from Texas, actually umm, my mom specifically she's from Dallas. My dad however, he's from Las Vegas as well.	
NR:	So what would you say you identify as ethnically?	
LR:	Ethnically I guess I would say I'm Mexican.	

NR:	Yeah and what about racially?	
LR:	Racially, white.	
NR:	Is it the same for the rest of your family?	
LR:	I think it's different for a lot of my family. A lot of them are more... I think they're actually indigenous Mexican.	
NR:	Why did your family move to Washington?	
LR:	Um, so my grandmother she moved here for the first time because she- she- she moved out of here to Las Vegas and then she came back after I was born, so the first time she came here was because my great uncle- he was in the air force. And then that first time was because she was in an abusive relationship with my biological grandfather, so she wanted to get away from that and so her brother was here and she thought might as well. And then I don't know about the second time they came here I guess for a change and they've been here ever since. Since I was two so yeah.	
NR:	Do they- Do you feel like they can connect a lot with other people in the same, like say ethnic group? So like your family- they're Mexican right?	
LR:	Yeah.	
NR:	So do you think like there's umm like a Mexican community here that you can connect to? Like in Tacoma or anywhere you've lived in Washington?	
LR:	Umm I would say so I think there is a pretty prominent like Mexican community. Um I think it might be different for my grandmother because she's not- she wasn't born in Mexico so she's like chicana you know, and my step-grandfather, he's like Mexican-Mexican so I'm- I'm sure there's like a divide you know like difference in uh. I don't know how to describe it, like difference in identity and stuff like that.	
NR:	Yeah.	
LR:	Culture I'm sure like there's- even though it's the same culture like umbrella, it's like there's probably differences.	
NR:	So, you think chicana is different from being like born in Mexico?	
LR:	I don't personally feel like I- I'm qualified to say like I- I- I guess there's a technical difference obviously because..	
NR:	Yeah.	

LR:	Like speaking just logically it's different, but I don't- I wouldn't be able to tell you like culturally if there's any difference.	
NR:	So do you consider yourself chicana?	
LR:	I guess I would, yeah. I haven't really put much thought into it, but I guess technically speaking yeah I would	
NR:	Yeah. So with your family's upbringing have they ever faced any instances of discrimination or racism? It can be anywhere but have they experienced it in Washington?	
LR:	Umm. So I don't know about Washington but I do know like my grandma growing up in like a southern part of Texas because she was, again, born in Texas really close to the border, so I know she experienced- also in like the 50s, 60s, 70s, something like that.	
NR:	Yeah.	
LR:	Um growing up during that kind of time in American history, I know that she definitely like was discriminated against, maybe not to the capacity of like other groups but yeah she tells me stories about like.. how she also had to ride in the back of the bus and like there was colored only.. you know things, and she was just seen as other. You know, not white. So I know that she has gone through that. I don't know about- I don't know about in Washington. She hasn't- I don't know not that I've seen. But I'm sure there is probably racism everywhere.	
NR:	Yeah.	
LR:	Even now- even in a different time.	
NR:	So you said she experienced like um, would you say it was segregation?	
LR:	Yeah.	
NR:	In Texas?	
LR:	Yeah.	
NR:	When- What year was she born?	
LR:	She was born in 65 so I the 70s, so still even though it was like more- it was.. I don't know I- I- I don't know exactly.	
NR:	Yeah. Has she ever mentioned- did those experiences like ever stick with her? Does it affect her at all?	

LR:	I think it does kind of uhh. I- I think it does stick with her obviously she still remembers like the details of it like she still remembers that stuff, and she was pretty young so I think it resonated with her and it changes the way she views like people I think. She does have a little bit of hesitancy with like white people, which I understand like, I don't know.	
NR:	Yeah. Does your family still experience like a lot of racism, like today?	
LR:	I don't- I'm sure they do. Um maybe I'm just really like blind to it, but I haven't seen it like up close you know like I haven't seen them- not that I can remember at least like I'm sure maybe I have witnessed it because... I don't know I- I don't remember.	
NR:	Has it ever personally happened to you directly?	
LR:	No. Definitely not. I just think like, I'm so very white- like I'm- I am white not even white passing I am just- I acknowledge that I'm white so I don't think I've ever had to feel- or nobody's gone out of their way to make me feel othered you know I've always been in a place of privilege being like so, you know visibly white you know? So I haven't gone through the same things my grandparents who are like- they're brown you know like..	
NR:	Yeah.	
LR:	They are- they're very ethnic looking you know so I- I've never experienced the things- and I probably will never experience the things that they've gone through like racism and things like that.	
NR:	Do you- have they shared their culture with you? Like do you feel connected to Mexican culture?	
LR:	Umm, I think, honestly I don't feel super connected which is kind of disheartening because I do want to be connected but it's just like.. ah. I think my grandma was so focused on survival that she didn't have time to be, you know, let us indulge in the culture you know like she- she's been on.. just like fight mode you know cause she's gone through a lot of things like. A lot of.. I'm sure it's because of her race you know like a lot of discrimination and things like that, and like I don't know if she's ever felt safe enough to like have us fully experience it. Like I know for my mother like she's not really connected with it you know, she doesn't even speak Spanish so. A lot of- a lot of my aunts and uncles don't speak Spanish, and I don't speak Spanish so it's like, some of that culture sometimes it feels like fades away because we're so like not- we're so Americanized.	
NR:	Do you ever think you'll be able to get back that culture?	
LR:	I'm sure there will be an opportunity for me and I, I wanna get closer with my grandparents on that aspect like I want to learn Spanish, I want to be-	

	<p>I want to you know go to Mexico, I want to experience those things, experience like things that like my step-grandfather like- things that he's experienced because I know like we grew up very differently, and just experiencing that and understanding things like that.</p>	
NR:	<p>Yeah.</p>	
LR:	<p>Would be nice you know.</p>	
NR:	<p>So where before in Washington have you lived?</p>	
LR:	<p>Umm so I've lived in Spanaway, I've lived in Tacoma, and then I've lived in Lakewood. I've actually lived in like Port Orchard before so I've been around.</p>	
NR:	<p>Mm. Why did you guys move so much?</p>	
LR:	<p>I.. I really don't know I think there's- I think there's some job insecurity in my family honestly cause sometimes our financial standing is kinda rocky.</p>	
NR:	<p>Were there any differences in those places like were the people different?</p>	
LR:	<p>Definitely like in- in a place like Port Orchard which is right next to Bremerton and- what's it called- Gig Harbor, like predominantly white wealthy areas versus like Tacoma, like it- it was very clearly a difference you know like the schools even like. I went to a school out in Port Orchard and it was just so, like the- the student population was so white first of all, and the school was- it was nice. And it was a lot nicer than it- like most schools I've gone to in Tacoma you know like. But in Tacoma it's so much more diverse like the neighborhoods, the schools, everything like y- you'll always see somebody of a different race or culture.</p>	
NR:	<p>Yeah.</p>	
LR:	<p>But somewhere like that is so different.</p>	
NR:	<p>So what's been your- which city has been your favorite or what part of Washington?</p>	
LR:	<p>I, I like Spanaway because it reminds me of my childhood.</p>	
NR:	<p>Really?</p>	
LR:	<p>Yeah I grew up there- I think that's where- the first place we went to when we moved back so like, I was there until I was about like five?</p>	
NR:	<p>Yeah.</p>	
LR:	<p>So yeah I- It reminds me of my childhood.</p>	

NR:	Do you think the people are nicer in some areas or are they meaner?	
LR:	Mmm. Probably. I think... I felt like in like Port Orchard people looked at us differently- like my family because again like it was super white and my grandparents again they're like very visibly brown.	
NR:	Yeah.	
LR:	And so I felt like they kind of treated us a little bit differently, so I guess maybe I have witnessed discrimination. But it's like not- not outward it's like you can just tell by the- the look on their face you know like-	
NR:	Yeah.	
LR:	You can just tell by their actions like they don't have to come out and say it it's just like it's clear.	
NR:	Have you ever felt insecure with your lack of connection to your culture?	
LR:	Yes. Yes I definitely do. I just feel like... sometimes I feel like those white people that try to you know, like, cosplay as certain ethnicities. I'm- I feel so- and I especially feel out of place with other like Mexican people who are like more in touch like more... one with their culture. I feel so like- I just feel like another white person being like, "I'm one-eighth Mexican" you know?	
NR:	Yeah. Do you think how you look on the outside affects how people view you in Washington? Or just anywhere really.	
LR:	Definitely yeah. Yeah again like as somebody who's very obviously white-looking- or at least in my opinion. I've been told that I look Hispanic, but I honestly believe I look plain white and I- I feel like that's probably an advantage you know?	
NR:	Yeah. But do you overall enjoy living in Washington? Like...	
LR:	Yeah. I do enjoy living in Washington like although there's some- there's some parts and like some groups of people that are kind of like... eh. You know.	
NR:	Yeah.	
LR:	Not so kind. Um a majority of Washington is like- it's a really good state like a lot of the law- or like the... the legislation and things of that nature, and like also the diversity it's really- it's really nice and I like it. I think I feel- I don't feel like... I don't know. I just feel accepted. And I also feel like my family's accepted you know cause I'm always insecure of that. I- I don't really focus on if I'm accepted- I already know like I'm- I look like a	

	<p>white person of course I'm gonna be.. fine. But I always worry for my family and I do feel like I don't have to worry about it here in a state like this.</p>	
NR:	<p>What do you think makes Washington different from other states?</p>	
LR:	<p>Mmm. I don't know, maybe the people.</p>	
NR:	<p>Yeah. Well that's all I had, so thank you for doing the interview with me.</p>	
LR:	<p>My pleasure.</p>	<p>< she works at chick fil a.</p>