

Nancy Haugh (NH): [00:01](#) Hello it is October 17th, Wednesday morning at 9:06 AM. My name is Nancy Haugh, I'm sitting with Amy Maca. If you wanna introduce yourself.

Amy Maca (AM): [00:11](#) Hi, I'm Amy Maca, I'm a Freshman at JMU... *(both laugh)*

NH: [00:15](#) That's so exciting! All right... so what are you studying, Amy?

AM: I'm studying Health Sciences right now...

NH: Very cool! Um...

AM: ...with a Pre-Med minor.

NH: Very cool! Nice! So looking at med school after...

AM: *(Smiling)* Yeah hopefully, I'm trying to see if I can get into Hopkins later on (NH: *gasps* into Hopkins!?) so yeah it's a big goal. *(Amy giggles as she says this last part)*.

NH: *(casually starstruck)* Holy Moly. Wow. I have to like stop myself saying anything profane *(both laugh)*. We also might want to speak up just a little bit (AM: OK) just in case, but um, so yeah, Amy! when and where were you born?

AM: [00:50](#) So I was born May 17th, 1999 and I was born in Guatemala City in Guatemala (NH: Oo!).

NH: [00:56](#) Very cool, very cool! 1999. *(Softly)* Wow, I was born in '97

AM: Oh...

NH: so just like...

AM: ...two years

NH: Yeah just two years, but it feels like forever...

AM: *(Laughs)*

NH: Um very cool, I was born in Leesburg so I'm from Northern Virginia. Yeah. Um, and so you already said you're a first year and that you're studying (*smiles as she says this*) Health Sciences with a Pre-Med because you're (*with a sing-songy voice and snapping her fingers in celebration*) gonna to be a doctor! Um so why did you choose *that* track of study? [The word "that" is emphasized]

AM: [01:24](#) Um, so before I was doing biology, but um, in high school, I hated biology, I ended up hating it, so I switched my major to Health Sciences because I still wanted to go on that (*pause*) medical track. (NH: Yeah...) So I chose Health Sciences just because I thought it'd be a much better fit for what I wanted to do without such a concentration on Biology. (*pause*) Um, I do like to help people as well, so... (NH: Yeah!) ...I hope to do that with that major.

NH: [01:50](#) Absolutely. Um, and you said that it's a better fit for what you hope to do, what does that kind of look like?

AM: [01:57](#) Um, so I hope to... obviously be a doctor, I want to go into surgery. (NH: Oh! (*softly*) wow). Yeah, Um, if I don't go into surgery, I do really wanna work with kids, in whatever field it is. Yeah (*soft laugh*).

NH: [02:09](#) You remind me so much of my roommate, (*both laugh*) he's also Pre-Med. Um, he wants to work with kids too. Um, very cool, so (*pensively*) I'm gonna scootch this one... [referencing the microphone] There we go. Um, so where is home for you?

AM: [02:25](#) So for me, home is wherever my family is uh right now. That's back in Centerville, Virginia. (NH: *cheers* NOVA! *both laugh*) So we've been there for awhile, so that's where my home is

NH: [02:32](#) Very cool, very cool! Did you go to school in Centerville too?

AM: I did, yeah I went to Centerville High School.

NH: (*repeats*) Centerville High School, very cool. Yeah. I went to Stonebridge (AM: Ah ok) cause, I'm from Leesburg-Ashburn area. (AM: *laughs*) Um, but Centerville's pretty close to me too... so (*imaging shrugging shoulders emoji*) Nice. Um, so a little bit about JMU... was JMU your first choice?

AM: [03:00](#) Um, it actually, it wasn't just because, I don't know, I didn't think it'd be the right fit for me, *(pause)* I'd never seen it either, like I've never seen campus (NH: *(thoughtfully)* ok yeah...) and um, *(quickly)* I just didn't for me diversity was like a big um component into choosing my school *(inhales deeply)* and I just didn't think JMU was it. But um, I applied anyway and I did come to visit and I loved it so. And I was completely wrong about diversity too.

NH: [03:25](#) *(smiling as she says this a little skeptically)* I don't know if you're that far off. It is a predominantly white school *(laughs)*.

AM: [03:31](#) *(smiling and a little passionately)* It is predominantly white yeah! (NH: yeah) But um, I just didn't think *(pause)* I'd meet like other people (NH: yeah) that were just different. I thought everyone would be white, (NH: yeah) but I made a lot of different friends here, so...

NH: [03:40](#) That's really cool. Especially since it's only been like two months now, you know... (AM: Yeah, yeah) Ah! (AM: *laughs lightly*) It's so exciting cause, you know, I'm a senior and I'm just like, my time is ending, (AM: Yeah) yours is beginning and it's just *(both at the same time)* really exciting! Um, yeah. JMU wasn't my first choice either. (AM: mhm *laughs*) I wanted to go to William and Mary, but it didn't get in. (AM: *empathetically* Oh...) Um, it's fine though because I love *(pause)* JMU (AM: Yeah), like I wouldn't do it differently. (AM: Yeah *laughs*) Yeah... Um, wonderful. So you already talked a little bit about what made you choose JMU, was it strange to kind of like *(pause)* not tour the campus and then be here? Like how was that transition?

AM: [04:18](#) Yeah. Um, so I actually didn't see campus until orientation, so I had already decided to come to JMU, but like kind of blindsided. (NH: Yeah) Um, at orientation, I was really nervous, but um, I saw how nice everyone was here. Um, the environment isn't tense it's like really laid back yet everyone's focused on academics. So I really like that mix... um there's also a lot of stuff to do here. Like there's, UREC, um, there's a lot of different clubs to get involved in and so that's why I liked JMU.

NH: [04:50](#) Nice! Very cool. Um, so yeah. How do you, how do you just like the university so far. I know you were just talking

about like, um, there's so much to do here, what are kind of the things that you've gravitated towards?

AM: [05:05](#) Oh, so right now, like my, the one thing I am the most involved in is LSA, which is (NH: Yeah yeah yeah!) Latino Student Alliance. Yes. I *really, really* love that organization. I've made so many friends through that, um, they're almost like another family here (NH: Yeah...) and I've become so close to them. So (*deep inhale*) that's my biggest, um, I've tried to become involved with like Pre-Med associations (NH: Yeah!) and um, little like hobby stuff like ASL club, just to kind of explore little things (*giggles as she says "little things"*).

NH: [05:37](#) Do you speak sign language?

AM: No, I don't. I used to know like the (*giggles*) alphabet, but I forgot. (*laughs*)

NH: I thought I knew how to name my, or, spell my name in ASL and then my roommate was like, "You know, that's not right?" It's like, daaaaang. (*both laugh*)

AM: [05:53](#) Yeah like, kinda like words here and there, but it's nothing like I'm fluent in it or anything but yeah.

NH: [05:58](#) Yeah... That's really cool though. Um, I'm really glad to hear that you've found such like a community in LSA. (AM: *smiling* yeah!) It's just an incredible organization. (AM: yeah) Um, (*hesitantly*) Cindy Fuentes is not still the president right?

AM: No, actually I believe she's still in the club.

NH": Oh, cool! Yeah. Last year I just remember she um, commented on an instagram post that CMSS [Center for Multicultural Student Services] had um put me in and she said that I was so cool and I about died. (*both laughing*) And I was like "Oh My God! Cindy thinks I'm cool!" (*both still laughing*) but um, that's just incredible. Cool, (*breathily*) Um so...

NH: [06:37](#) ...what is a typical day good day as a first year student at JMU Look like for you?

AM: [06:42](#) So, it's pretty like plain. I wake up, I go to classes, have lunch with friends. Um, in between time, like either like, you know, get a study group, study, do homework, and then

if I have free time we might just go somewhere to hang out a little bit (NH: yeah) but there aren't like, many places we can hang out though since we don't have, cars yet (*laughs*).

NH: [07:03](#)

Oh, that's a mood. (both *yeah*)

AM:

So it kind of restricted to be on campus. Um...

NH:

I forgot about that when you're a first year that (AM: yeah...) you're pretty much on campus...

AM:

[07:13](#)

the whole time... (both) yeah but um every once in a while we like, have friends that have cars, so we'll go out and venture out into (*giggling*) Harrisonburg a little (*laughs*).

NH:

[07:20](#)

Nice... yeah, um, what were your or what's... sorry. (*pause*) (quickly) what's your favorite dining hall?

AM:

(*firmly*) E-hall. (NH: *repeats* E-Hall?) I've got to say E-Hall...

NH:

That's the *most* valid choice...

AM:

Yeah they have like more variety than D-hall, like, IDK it has the same thing everyday—

NH:

I think D-hall's very hyped (AM: It is!...) and like it just doesn't live up to it.

AM:

It doesn't. I mean the-there's a lot there, but just, yeah, I don't know, (NH: yeah) I'm more for E-Hall.

NH:

For me it's more for the idea of D-Hall (*giggling*) than the food (AM: yeah), um (AM: *giggles*) but yeah, no, I lived in Shenandoah and my first year, so E-Hall was like 24/7. (AM: yeeeeeaaahhh) it was great.

AM:

I'm so jealous (*both laugh*)

NH:

[08:03](#)

It was a good time, it was a good time.

NH:

[08:06](#)

Um, I know you just said (AM: *coughs*) that you haven't really gotten too much of an opportunity to like go out and explore Harrisonburg, but from what you have experienced, how do you like it so far?

AM: [08:16](#) Um, I really like it, yeah I thought it was going to be like in the middle of nowhere and I was going to have anything (*laughing as she says this*).

NH: [08:22](#) I mean we have a sheets, we have **two** sheets. (*giggles*)

AM: [08:27](#) Yeah, two sheets, um, it kind of has everything you need. Like there's Walmart, um a Target there's um, Chipotle too, um, I've found a few like Latino restaurants, so there's a good variety that's just going on here.

NH: [08:40](#) Yeah... I'm trying to remember, um (*pause*) the one that I **really** like. It's over by Eastern Mennonite University's campus, I **cannot** remember the name for the **life** of me though. It starts with an "M". (*pause*) It's really good! I'll try to remember it and um (*pause*) text you (AM: *softly* yeah sure!) because that's a great place. But yeah. Um, have you explored like at all, like, um, like downtown or anything like that?

AM: [09:05](#) **No**, I've wanted to go downtown. I know, um, my, like during FROG week [First Year Orientation Guide Week] my FROG group went, but that week was just so exhausting that like, and they went like towards the end of the (NH: yeah) day. So I just went to like sleep instead of go, so I haven't gotten the chance to (NH: yeah) go yet.

NH: [09:20](#) And it's like they schedule it so that you're doing like the really intense, um, Where I'm From poems...

NH: [09:28](#) and then it's like, oh yeah, now we're just going to go downtown and walk around and have fun. (AM: yeah) And it's like, wait a minute, (AM: yeah!) I need a moment! You know?

NH: [09:35](#) Um, yeah, I was a FROG last year (AM: Really!? Wooow) so like I **know** that struggle from both sides. (*both laugh*) Um, great though, I-I mean you have so much time if you want to explore it more, (AM: yeah...) you have like all the time in the world, (AM: yeah) which is great.

AM: [09:56](#) Um, (*softly*) hopefully (*both laugh*)

NH: [09:57](#) Yeah! Um, cool, so I'd really like to ask like a little bit about um, your um, family life (AM: sure) and so, um, what... (*drawn out*) I lost my train of thought even though I literally have questions to go off of, um, do you have siblings?

AM: [10:14](#) I do have one little brother, so I'm the oldest.

NH: [10:17](#) (*excited*) How was your little brother?

AM: He's 15.

NH: (*gasps and says excitedly*) That's how old my little brother is!

AM: Really!?

NH: Yes!

AM: That's crazy. (NH: Awee!) (*both laughing*)

AM: [10:27](#) So... (NH: yeah) he just started High School, um, he's like some weird little phase right now. (NH: yeah) Um, it's kind of weird cause it's kind of like looking up to him for questions now... and different things like not just academics but like just life too and it's a little weird. Um, but he's, he's super smart! He's much smarter than I am for sure. Which I'm jealous of, but (*pause*), it's fine (*giggles*).

NH: [10:51](#) Honestly though (AM: mhm?), same my little brother's uh just really, really smart.

AM: [10:56](#) Yeah, (NH: Um) he's super responsible, like he's the complete opposite of what I was as a kid.

NH: [11:01](#) Oh wow. Yeah

AM: [11:02](#) For sure. Um, he's already like, thinking about what college he wants to go to (*deep inhale*)

NH: [11:07](#) Wow!

AM: [11:08](#) Yeah, he wants to go to Yale. So yeah (NH: *shocked* Holy!) he has big (NH: holy moly!) aspirations... (*laughs*)

NH: [11:13](#) Gosh that's incredible! (AM: Yeah! *laughs*) Wow! Um, good luck to him! (AM: Yeah)

NH: [11:17](#) That's like I get, I get goosebumps hearing things like this. (AM: Like that yeah...) Yeah, um, do you find... I know being on campus for me, like being away from my little brother is like really hard for me because I'm really close to him (AM: yeah) do like finally you feel that too, or how do you navigate that?

AM: [11:39](#) Yeah. So it was really hard at first, especially like the first week. Um, so when I first moved in, like my parents left me this envelope with like letters from all my family, like wishing me luck in college. (NH: *softly* Oh my gosh!) So, in those letters there was one included from him. He was just like, oh, thank you for like the past 15 years, like thank you for all the rides and all that stuff. And so that made me like really miss him cause we did do a lot of stuff together once, um, (*deeply inhales*) once I did get my car and stuff like that (NH: yeah), we started to spend a lot more time, especially now that we're older, (*deeply inhales*) we don't fight as much as we did like when we were young. So we get a lot better, along better...

NH: Get along a lot better yeah...

AM: So I do miss him (NH: Yeah) yeah but...

AM: [12:24](#) Um, we text every day and Facetime too, so it's not as hard as it was at the beginning (*laughs*).

NH: [12:31](#) Yeah. (AM: Yeah...) Yeah. That's something that I think when I got here as a first year I was like, Oh I miss my family, or not my family. I miss my siblings (AM: Yeah) like a lot, but hey! Facetime exists, you know—

NH: Like snapchat exists like (AM: yeah) like (*both laugh*) (AM: yeah) um, the blessings of technology right? (*laughs*)

AM: Yeah I know (*both laugh*)

NH: You mentioned that you're like entire family, like wrote notes. Do you have like a really like large, immediate family?

AM: [12:59](#) Yeah um, (NH: yeah) They're not um, all here though. I only have a small amount of my family here, most of them are back in Guatemala. (NH: yeah) So my dad, I don't know how they like, he managed to get letters from them too, um...

AM: [13:14](#) so yeah it's a big (NH: wow) big family...

NH: That's so special though. (AM: It is...) he was able to get letters, even though they're not here to--

AM: Yeah it made me just homesick a lot more though. (NH: yeah) I was like, you guys really have to do this (NH: *laughs*) to me!

NH: Wow...

AM: [13:30](#) Yeah. My family's huge. My Dad has like, three other siblings, so does my mom. So I got and then they each have a bunch of children. So it's just a huge, huge family.

NH: [13:37](#) Wow. (AM: Yeah) Yeah. Um, (*pause*) so... here wait... I'm just gonna move this [the microphone] a little closer. (AM: Go ahead) because I'm so paranoid about noise um, (AM: *giggles*) or sound. But um, so... would you be able to... Well, no, we'll get to that. Do you have pets? (*laughs*)

AM: Do I have -- Yeah, I have one hamster... (NH: *laughs* awee) Yeah she's I think a year and a half old now...

AM: [14:03](#) or maybe going on two years. Um, I do really want a dog though but...

NH: [14:10](#) That's something that I keep thinking about. Like I'm graduating soon. That means I can finally get pets. (AM: Yeah...) Like (*laughs*)

AM: Yeah I realize like people on campus like that go here, have pets where they live, so I'm like maybe but then like, I can barely feed myself how am I gonna feed a dog (*laughs*).

NH: I honestly. I looked up last night how to get an emergency support animal, (AM: ooh) you know like a service dog? (AM: yeah!) So it's like, that would be incredible, (AM: yeah yeah) but it's a process (AM: yeah it is) that um... Wow, a hamster, that's great! (AM: yeah *laughs*) I honestly thought about getting rats in the summer, (AM: Really?) which is like similar, I guess, (AM: Yeah) both rodents, whatever, but um, I couldn't end up doing it because like, things in my life are gonna change so... (*laughs*)

NH: [14:58](#) Yeah. But um okay. So done with the pets. Back to your, um, family though, can you um, talk a little bit about your mom's side of the family?

AM: [15:03](#) So my mom's family, she has two sisters and one brother. Um, (*pause*) both of her parents are together as well, um, only her brother's married and the rest aren't married yet so... it's kind of smaller on that side of her family, Yeah.

NH: [15:27](#) Is she, um, oldest, middle?

AM: My mom is the oldest...

NH: Oldest wow yeah...

AM: (*Laughs while saying this lightly*) Her childhood was a mess!

NH: Yeah!? Do you wanna um...

AM: Elaborate...

NH: [15:38](#) ...you can speak to that if you went to?

AM: Yeah. So when she was younger, um, (*quickly*) so my grandma was always working, I don't really know where my grandpa was, like, during that time, um, but my grandma was always working, like, trying to get her four children, like, well maintained. (NH: Yeah) So my mom, she'd go to school and then she'd come home and she'd have to like take care of all her little siblings, which was like a really diverse age group, like there was one that was really close to her age. The other one is like four years apart and the other one was like a little baby (NH: *very softly* Oh...) so, (NH: Yeah) yeah, so she really had to um, just come home and um, take care of them and then as soon as she'd get done with that, like she'd have to like find time to do her schoolwork, which was a lot more intensive back in Guatemala because... (NH: Yeah...)

AM: [16:25](#) (*quickly*) It's kind of weird the system over there, like, if I could explain it, you know like let's say you were in sixth grade you get almost like the amount of schoolwork you get as a senior in high school (NH: interesting) and (*pause*) it's a lot heavier over there so, (*inhales*) she almost had no life (NH: Yeah...) before she even met my dad...

NH: No really time for herself...

AM: Yeah.

NH: Yeah, um, why do you think they do that? In terms of schoolwork...?

AM: Schoolwork, um, I don't know? I think part of it is just cause the, I guess like the gang violence drug is so prevalent there, so maybe it's to kind of just keep them

from involving themselves and stuff like that (NH: Yeah...) and keep them busy with schoolwork, but it's so intense to the point that you almost get no life during your school year (NH: *passionately* Yeah!) it's hard...

NH: Or maybe even to (*slowly, thoughtfully*) anticipate... like the, the idea that like students might leave and to give them (AM: Yeah) like enough information before. (AM: Yeah) that's so interesting!...

AM: Yeah. But it's...it's crazy.

NH: [17:23](#) Yeah! (AM: *giggles*) It sounds like it. (AM: Yeah) Um, do you... (*hesitantly*) know a little bit more about your grandma? Do you wanna like...

AM: [17:33](#) My grandma... I actually don't know much about her. (NH: Yeah) I'm... trying to think back on. (NH: Yeah) I don't kinda just know like the lineage, but (NH: yeah) as far as her life, I just remember she used to work at a liquor store at one point (*pause*) and they used to run a liquor store with her dad. Um, but that's about as much as I know...

NH: [17:54](#) Huh! In Guatemala she ran a liquor store?

AM: Yeah, in Guatemala yeah...

NH: Cool... (AM: Yeah) Um, so how did your mom meet your dad?

AM: [18:07](#) (*smiling*) Um, they met through church actually! Yeah, cause it's the funniest story.

NH: (*quickly and light hearted*) Now you gotta tell it (AM: yeah) because I can see how happy you are getting (AM: *laughs*) like thinking about this! (*laughs*)

AM: [18:13](#) So... they've known each other like almost their whole lives, like they were 16-17 when they first met each other. Um, and my dad was kind of like the youth leader at the church. Um, and then so my dad had been trying to like date my mom ever since that young age, but my mom was like, (*voice gets higher to impersonate mom*) "Noo, like I don't like you!" (*Inhales*) Um, my grandma was like a huge supporter of my dad, too, um, she was always like pushing, like, (*voice gets higher to impersonate grandma*) "Come on, give him a chance!" Um, but my mom was so judgmental. She was like, (*matter of factly*) "he's too fat!" Which he

wasn't even fat! (NH: Oh my gosh!) In my opinion like I've seen picture of him, he was pretty slim so I don't know.

AM: [18:51](#) I mean my mom was like the skinniest girl too, so maybe (*laughs as she says this*) that's why I'm. Um, but yeah, later on, like, then my dad became a pastor at 21. (NH: Wow!) Um, my dad tried again. Um, so there was one time that he just called up at her house and um, my mom's dad answered, he was like, "***Who's this?***" And he was like, he played like the pastor card, he was like, (*voice gets higher to impersonate dad*) "This a pastor, like I'm just like, can I speak to your daughter?" (*laughs*). And my grandpa was like --

NH: [19:14](#) Ooh he was being *sneaky*! (*laughs*)

AM: [19:18](#) Yeah my grandpa was like going crazy. He was like, "Oh my God, the pastor's calling my daughter!" (*Laughs*) so my mom um, they finally went on a date, um, my mom tells me that they went on like a little ice cream day and that my mom was so upset because she said that she hadn't eaten that day cause she thought he was going to take her to like some dinner or (*laughs as she says this*) something like that!

NH: [19:43](#) Oh man!

AM: Um, yeah! Um, so they went on dates and then eventually they got engaged and (*voice gets quieter*) they got married. Uh yeah (*laughs*)

NH: [19:50](#) Wow!

AM: That's how they met.

NH: That's so like, that's so cute! And so interesting, kind of like the idea that um, the church played a huge role (AM: Yeah) in like bringing them together. Do you, (AM: Yeah) um, how do you feel like (*slowly*) religion influences your family life?

AM: [20:10](#) Um, so it's a really, really big part of our lives, um, especially because my dad's a pastor, um...

NH: He's still a pastor?

AM: Still a pastor (NH: Gotchya) yeah. Um, so basically like, I went to Sunday, I mean like I went to church every Sunday,

like I could count the amount of, like Sundays I missed like in one hand until I got to college. Like it was *every Sunday*. There was like, the world could be falling apart and we'd still go to church. Um, but I feel like we had that good balance between um being really, really like having God as a part of our lives, but also just not (*inhales*) letting that consume our lives either cause I know in Latino culture like, there are some like very religious people and it's just like consumes their whole life, like there's certain things they don't do (NH: Yeah) because they let that restrict living a normal life, so I, I think we found that good balance of just living our life, um, but also being like, I guess righteous (NH: Yeah) in the eyes of God

NH: [21:14](#)

Yeah. I, um, I went to a Catholic school for nine years, (AM: *smiling* really?) so I definitely, um, know that feeling of every Sunday going to church no matter what. (AM: Mhm) I obviously don't know it from the Latino perspective because I'm not Latino, right, so I'm kind of interested or what are some of the things that you think, cause you mentioned that, um, there are some Latinos that won't do certain things (AM: Yes) because of religion. (AM: *clears throat*) Um, can you speak a little more to that?

AM: [21:46](#)

Yeah. So, um, there's, I guess like a certain like denomination that's called like Pentecostal (NH: Yeah *she says this with recognition*) So I know in Latino culture, like they can't cut their hair. They have to, the woman always have to wear skirts to a certain length. Um, they, like in some churches they can't wear makeup um, in like some extremes, like they just even see like, cause I know with males, like soccer is such a thing, um, they see soccer as like...

NH: (*jokingly*) Just call it what it is, it's football, no (*laughs*).

AM: [22:18](#)

It's football yeah (*both laugh*). Yeah but, um, they would consider that as like a sin (NH: Interesting) just watching soccer. Um, (NH: Wow!) yeah, just simple things like that. So um listening to certain music, could like, (NH: Yeah!) so yeah it's a little intense um, (NH: Yeah...) but yeah I think we found that good like, my dad loves soccer, but like (*laughing*) we still love college [note: this word is unclear from the audio] (NH: Yeah) and like, you know, there's like no correlation!

NH: [22:48](#) That's so, I feel like I could like compare and contrast these things forever. Like I'm thinking in my head about this one teacher I had who told us that she would make her son walk all the way around the other side of a mall to avoid a Victoria Secret so that he wouldn't be like (AM: Wait...)tempted by the photos (AM: *shocked* No!) that he saw, you know, (AM: That's...what...) and just like altering your life in that way (AM: Yeah...) it's just interesting. (both: Yeah...) Um, yeah! So do you want to talk a little bit more about your Dad's side of the family? (AM: That's fine) Because it sounds like he's the bigger side of the family. (*giggling*)

AM: Yeah so he's the youngest out of four. (NH: OK) yeah so he's the baby

NH: So is my dad!

AM: [23:30](#) Yeah so, that makes a lot... I think that was a big part in forming his personality too. He's like little spoiled I guess in like a sense of personality. (*Laughs*)

AM: [23:41](#) Um, but he has two older sisters and an older brother, so he's the oldest. Um, they're all married. Um, there's my grandpa, my grandpa and... I have a bunch of cousins on that side too, they each had like four kids.

NH: Are they similar in age to you?

AM: They are, um but there's also some older ones. I know I have like a couple of cousins that are like back to back, so one was like born in March the other one in April and then there was me so that was like a little chain of, (NH: Awe...) cousins that (*laughs*) came about (NH: Yeah...) Um, and then some of my cousins have had kids themselves. So it's growing. (*laughs*)

NH: [24:23](#) Um, yeah, would you say the majority of them are in Guatemala or...?

AM: They are. Um, I did have, so I have, my un-uncle is here. Um, I did have an aunt that also lived here um, but she retired with my uncle, um, (*pause then quickly*) her husband, back to Guatemala, so.

NH: Interesting...

AM: Most of them are back over there...

NH: Huh! Um... what do you kind of know about your dad's parents?

AM: So I know, I know (*sighs*) I know it was almost like a similar story to how my parents met, like, (*pause then quickly*) I know my grandma wasn't about, (*smiling*) like, she wasn't attracted to my grandpa at all. Um, I know they came from very different backgrounds and (NH: Yeah) like, um, my grandfather was more from like, I guess a (*said with a questioning tone*) poor family and my mom, uh, my grandma was from a wealthier side of the family. (NH: Oh!) Um so yeah.

NH: Interesting! Um, I also forgot to ask this earlier, what are your parents' names?

AM: Oh, um so, my dad's name is Wilson and my mom's name is Patty. Yeah (*giggles*).

NH: [25:28](#) Cool! (*laughs*) I immediately just thought of (AM: *coughs*) the volleyball. I think it is, the (*pause*) there's some like pop culture reference to an inanimate object named Wilson.

AM: (*In recognition*) Oh!

NH: Do you know what I'm talking about?

AM: I think I know what you're talking about!

NH: Like--

AM: There's like a—

NH: Like the guy's like, marooned on an island. He like, (AM: Yeah) draws like a coconut or volleyball or something.

AM: I think I know what you're saying—

NH: My professor's gonna listen to this recording and know it, (*both laugh*) but. Um, (*both still laughing*) cool! Thank you so much for sharing that (AM: Yeah). I kind of want to, um, shift gears a little bit towards education (AM: OK), what, we already talked a little bit about your mom's education. I know you, and your dad was a pastor, so did he go to school formally?

AM: [26:12](#) Yeah. So, um, before becoming a pastor he was in college to become an architect —

NH: Oh wow!

AM: Yes.

NH: [26:20](#) That's pretty different! (*laughs*)

AM: (*agreeing*) Yeah very different, um but...

AM: [26:23](#) ...there was this thing at my grandmother's church where um, the pastor I guess retired and they needed like just a temporary like one, so they chose my dad to be the temporary one and he just became permanently that he felt like he had a calling from God (NH: Yeah) so that he chose that as a career, um. He *did* plan to continue with architecture, but I guess just finding some weren't allowed him to do that. So he did go to like a seminar. Um, and he got like, I guess a... religion education (*giggles*).

NH: Yeah, did, um, did either of your parents get college degrees?

AM: No they didn't (NH: *repeating* No?) no they didn't yeah...

NH: Are you the first...?

AM: I am first generation college (NH: *congratulatory snapping*). Yeah. (*laughs*)

NH: That's incredible!

AM: Yeah there's—

NH: Yeah that's a lot of—

AM: Pressure yeah... But it's exciting...

NH: Yeah! We can um, (AM; *clears throat*) do you wanna t- we don't have to talk about that—

AM: Yeah yeah it's fine—

NH: If you want to, but—

AM: We can talk about that—

NH: If you want to speak to that yeah.

AM: Um, so it was just hard wa- applying to colleges because especially like, even if they hadn't gotten a college

education back in Guatemala, I was first to do it here (NH: Yeah) in the US.

AM: [27:33](#) Um, so it was just, the whole process was confusing. I just didn't understand like what were the differences between colleges? Like why did it matter? (NH: Yeah) Um, cost was also crazy, like I just didn't know how we were going to fund that (*inhales deeply*). Um, it was just difficult going through high school, not knowing exactly cause, what to do? Because I know a lot of my peers, they have their parents to kinda guide them through like, can you take these classes? They'll help you—

NH: Yeah or siblings...

AM: Yeah um, they'll help you be a better like prospect, um, to get into certain colleges so, I didn't have that um... Choosing colleges was also a challenge. Um, I know when choosing in James Madison, like that was the biggest like challenge we had between our family because... um in Latino culture, like everyone stays together (NH: Yeah...). Um, it's very rare for somebody to leave at such a young age until they're married.

AM: [28:32](#) Um, so they really, they wanted me to stay like in Mason, um, but I just didn't feel like Mason was something for me. I really—

NH: My older sister went to Mason—

AM: wanted to—

NH: Yeah you really wanted to come to Madison

AM: Yeah...

NH: Um, did you feel like your family pressured you to stay? You di- you said you just said (AM: Yes!) that actually there was—

AM: Yes um—

NH: Yeah

AM: They did, there was a huge, huge pressure from them um, at one point they were like, (*firmly*) “You have no choice, you're going to Mason.” Um, so I was really upset about that, so (NH: Yeah) I kinda like worked towards, to make

sure I made ga- I went to Mason, I mean (*laughs breathily*) Madison, (*both giggle*) um, so I ended up coming with a whole plan, like a whole plan um, so I had my FAFSA, but still with it, it wasn't enough, to pay for uh JMU. Um, so I did come up with a plan to just get two jobs over the summer to help me come to Madison.

AM: [29:27](#) Um, so with that, my parents like, just realize that I really wanted to go to Madison and we talked it through and um, here I am now. (NH: Yeah!) They're super excited about me being in Madison though um, they see now why I chose Madison over Mason um...

NH: It's a a very different feel...

AM: (*agreeing*) It is!

NH: Yeah...yeah

AM: And they were just worried I guess that I wouldn't do well on my own, but um, my dad did tell me like, he realized that during orientation that I'd be so much better off here. There were so many more opportunities for me to do, um (NH: Yeah), in following the career that I wanted to follow. (NH: Yeah) (*proudly*) I have their full support so (*Laughs*)...

NH: That's so nice. Yeah, it's incredible. Um so back on this theme of education. What was your kind of elementary, middle school, high school experience?

AM: Um, so elementary was kind of all over the place because I did start my education back in Guatemala.

NH: [30:28](#) Okay (AM: So...) we'll get there, so maybe (*laughs*)—

AM: (*quietly*) Let's skip over that!

NH: Yeah! Yeah...

AM: Let's skip over and I'll come back

NH: Yeah!

AM: [30:35](#) Um, so I did do that for awhile um... Then I started my education here in first grade, um... we moved a lot just cause I don't know why we moved a lot, but I remember

going to different elementary schools almost every single grade.

NH: Wow!

AM: So yeah, (*laughs*) we moved a lot (NH: Yeah). Um, then it kinda like plateaued once I got to middle school, like we finally like, we bought a house and we stayed in one place. Um, and then high school was pretty um, solid, stayed in one place. (*pause*) um, (NH: Yeah) I would say elementary school was the hardest just cause that's when I was learning English and stuff like that um (NH: Yeah). And trying to like, assimilate I guess. Um so—

NH: That's a keyword huh? (*Laughs*)

AM: Yeah so that was (NH: Yeah) a time. It's—

NH: So, oh, I don't wanna—

AM: It's fine!

NH: Cut you off—

AM: (*smiling*) That's okay. I was just gonna say middle school and high school were better compared to that.

NH: [31:37](#) That's, that's good to hear, um, and get to know you got through it right?.

AM: Yeah! (*both laugh*)

NH: Um, yeah so I think that brings us naturally to like your immigration story. (AM: Yeah) Um, so how did your parents come to find Virginia?

AM: Uh...

NH: Like why—

AM: Why Virginia...

NH: Why here?

AM: [31:57](#) Yeah um, so I mentioned before that I had an uncle, um so he lived here, so we specifically chose Virginia because we would ha-, well we thought we would have aid for him, um he kinda like fell through. Um yeah...

NH: Oh!

AM: [32:13](#) We were hoping... so we would, we were gonna move here and then he had a house um, that we will be able to rent, um, but that kind of fell through, so it was a little hard like (*softly*) finding a house afterwards. It ended up working out, but that's why we chose Virginia specifically.

NH: Because your uncle is here?

AM: Yeah.

NH: Um, and he was in Northern Virginia?

AM: Yeah, he lived in uh Chantilly at the time so...

NH: Gotchya, yeah... How did he, do you know how he came to North Virginia?

AM: I don't actually, I want to say he was involved in the military—

NH: In the military...

AM: But I feel like I have that mixed up with some other...

NH: [32:53](#) Too many uncles!

AM: (*Both laugh*) So yeah I'm not sure!

NH: Yeah... So... can you talk a little bit about like the physical journey from Guatemala to Virginia?

AM: [33:02](#) Yeah. So it was a plane ride—

NH: (*Repeating*) It was a plane ride. Yeah!

AM: Yeah. Um, I was lucky enough to not to go through the whole, um, I guess like when most people think of immigration, um with Latinos, it's like um crossing the border (NH: Yeah) and going through that whole like um, hardship of having to do that (NH: Yeah). But I was lucky to just hop on a plane and get over here (*laughs*).

NH: (*repeating*) Get over here yeah. And did you take the plane out of Guatemala City?

AM: M-Yeah!

NH: Gotchya.

AM: And then I think we did like a layover somewhere and the went to Virginia.

NH: How old were you?

AM: I was six years old at the time—

NH: Six years- oh my gosh you were just a baby!

AM: Yeah...

NH: [33:43](#) Wow. So... do you remember anything about your perception of the US?

AM: [33:50](#) Um, so as a little kid I didn't really know much about the US. Um just cause I guess like at the time there wasn't as much technology as there is now (NH: Yeah). Um, so my perceptions are basically current, just like, oh, us, like there's Disney World...

NH: [34:07](#) (*Firmly and jokingly*) There's Disney world, that's it! (*laughs*).

AM: [34:10](#) That- yeah that's like all I thought it was like Disney World! And then, um, I remember when I did live in Guatemala, like when my uncle would visit, he'd bring me like all these cool toys from here and I just thought like, oh, there's cool toys over there and um... um blonde people. That's what I thought too. I thought everyone was blonde (NH: *shocked* Oh my gosh!) and blue eyes. (NH: Whaaat!) I remember they told me like everyone was super tall over there um, cause in Guatemala (NH: Yeah!) everyone's pretty short (*laughs*) so...

NH: That's so interesting!

AM: [34:40](#) Yeah that, those are just, the few perceptions I had. I didn't have a lot (*clears throat*) yeah...

NH: [34:46](#) Yeah... um, and how did it feel leaving?

AM: [34:48](#) Um, it was hard just because my whole family was there. I had both sets of grandparents, um spoiled me to death (*both laugh*), um so leaving was really hard. I remember the day, um, we came over here, they dropped us off at the airport and I just, I didn't, I thought we were going to like visit the

US, like hadn't really processed (NH: Oh yeah...) that we really like leaving permanently. Um (*pauses*) it was just hard though, I remember (NH: Yeah). Um, cause then I didn't realize I wouldn't see them for like awhile. Like we weren't sure if we'd see them again. Um, so yeah.

NH: [35:30](#) Yeah, um, what- so it doesn't sound like your parents sat you down and told you...

AM: [35:38](#) No, like they kind of just mentioned it. I kind of got the idea because we were packing everything um... It was kind of confusing at the time, like why we were packing all of our (*inhales*) um stuff at our house (NH: Yeah), like why we're giving away furniture. Um, it was- yeah it was weird. I don't, I don't remember that well anymore.

NH: Yeah!

AM: It's been a while—

NH: Yeah cause you were six! (*laughs*).

AM: Yeah I was six like (*both laughing*) yeah...

NH: Wow... Um, do you know anything about, kind of like *why* they decided to leave when they decided to leave?

AM: Um, yeah. So I know now because my dad, um, he um, puts it a lot of his uh sermons. Um, (NH: Ah!) so the reason we moved was because he thought he had like a calling from God. Um so back in Guatemala he had a big picture. Um, so he felt like God had told him to come over here and start, you know, a Latino community here um with a church and start on here. Um, so that's why we came over here so we could reach out to those who maybe didn't have a church they could go to.

NH: [36:51](#) Wow!

AM: So that's why...

NH: Um, what does your mom think?

AM: Um, so at first my mom was a little hesitant obviously because h-her family was there (NH: Yeah!) um so she would have to leave them behind, but they ended up, my mom just ended up saying like, "You know, it doesn't matter where we go as long as us four stay together." Um,

so he told- she told him um, as long as we could all go together like that, it was fine. So (NH: Wow...) they ended up coming to an agreement.

NH: Yeah, I feel like that also just puts the whole idea of going to GMU versus JMU in like a *whole* different context too.

AM: (*Quietly*) Yeah...

NH: Um, so... di- what was I gonna ask? (*Giggles*) Um, (*smiling*) you talked about how you thought there is only Disney World's here, (AM: Yeah) that everybody was tall and blonde and blue eyed (*both laughing*). Um, what do you think now?

AM: [37:50](#) Um... I obviously think that's not true anymore and there's a lot of diversity here there's short people too (*both laugh*). Um, I was definitely shocked when I saw like a white person with brown hair. I was like, I found out I was like yay! (*both laugh*). I was like what this like happens? (*laughs*) I learned that there wasn't just white people too though, that there were a lot of other immigrants as well, or just, um, children of immigrants so... It's not it's (NH: Yeah) just one mold. It's a lot more diverse. Especially now.

NH: I don't want to cut you off. Sorry—

AM: No that's ok!

NH: Um, where did this like stereotype of Americans come from?

AM: (*Sighs*) I-I have no idea... It's kind of a big stereotype in Guatemala that like that's the one thing everyone thinks. Um, I know when I go back to visit everyone thinks like (*voice gets higher to impersonate*), "Oh, so how are like, how's everyone like the blonde, like white, blue eyed people?" I'm like, well, there's different people over there. Not everyone's (NH: Yeah) the same. Um, I know they just think that like, everyone's the same though, that's the thing that just goes around whenever somebody talks about the US um, and somebody from the US that's like the stereotypical, like person they described. Yeah.

NH: [39:10](#) Yeah... (AM: *coughs*) Um, how... (*perplexed*) Oh what was I gonna to ask? (*pause, both laugh*) It just left my

mind! Um, (AM: *coughs*) I'm blanking, (AM: It's ok) but if I think about what I wanted to ask, I'll ask you again—

AM: Yeah go back...

NH: Um, so what do you wish people knew about Guatemala... in the US? Oh, I remember what I wanted to ask!

AM: Go ahead!

NH: But OK!

AM: OK sorry—

NH: Um, (*both laugh*) you're making me think of this like this struggle between like what does the word “American” mean?

AM: Yeah...

NH: So wh-what is that like? What does that mean to you?

AM: [39:49](#) Um, so now it means um, somebody not necessarily somebody that's white or born here, I just feel like it's somebody who just like identifies this as somewhere that they feel they're at home. Um (*pause*) just someone that, you know, not like the typical, like patriotic, like, “Oh! USA! USA!”

NH: [40:12](#) (*Giggles*)

AM: [40:14](#) (*Laughs*) You know there's different types of Americans. (*Pause*) I guess just, I don't know (*laughs*)

NH: [40:20](#) Yeah um,

AM: (*Still laughing*) I guess just, I identify—

NH: Um, I'm wondering what your take is on this idea that “American” applies to like both North and South America, you know?

AM: Oh! (*both say this*) yeah...

AM: [40:33](#) For sure um, (*quickly*) I always thought it was interesting how when people said “American,” they instantly think of you- the United States.

NH: Yeah!

AM: When technically I could be an American and somebody from Brazil can be an American too. (NH: Yeah) Um, so I just always thought it was weird that- how that's become like a predominant idea.

NH: [40:53](#) Yeah. How do, um, in your experience how to Guatemalans kind of reconcile with that?

AM: (*questioning*) With the whole like...

NH: With like, this like term, you know, like how (AM: Mhm...), like how do they see themselves like, do they see themselves (AM: That's-) needing to fit into this word? Like...

AM: [41:12](#) I don't think so. I think we're just happy being who we are.

NH: Just doing you!

AM: Yeah um, I think we're not just, I think we're not so stuck on like, um, fitting the certain level um, just as much as just like living our culture, like just living- just living normal lives and (*laughs*).

NH: [41:33](#) Yeah, yeah! That was um, not to (AM: *coughs*) make it sound like you speak for all Guatemalans—

AM: No right...

NH: I was just—

AM: Yeah yeah right!

NH: Generally curious what you, um, thought about it, but, okay! So back to the question that I just asked though, what do you wish people in the US knew about Guatemala?

AM: [41:34](#) Um, so I feel like when people talk about Guatemala, I feel like the first perception is like poverty, um, because there are a lot of like missions trips and um, people that go to Guatemala and help—

NH: “Voluntourism”...

AM: Yeah...

NH: Yeah...

Am: What do you think of the- I know there was a song that came out, like Guatemala, it was like a, like a rap song. So I feel like it could just be about that too um... But (NH: Yeah) I just wish they knew, like, it's not all like that. Like, um, there's like a beautiful place to me to be honest (NH: Yeah!) um. Then they call it like the land of eternal spring because there was always beautiful weather.

NH: Oh Wow!

AM: Um, there's a lot of nature over there um, a lot of beautiful places to visit and... there's a lot of good food. So I just wish they knew that, it's more than just, I guess poverty, like that's only- that just such a small part of what it actually is. There's so much more to Guatemala than just it that.

NH: [42:49](#) Yeah, yeah! Um, cool. So you already talked about how when you came to the US, you had to learn English. Um, I'm wondering if you could talk about navigating that language barrier from what you remember cause again, (AM: Yeah) you were like six! (AM: Yeah) Um, so speaking to *that* language barrier both like in the education system but also like how did your family kind of deal with that transition?

AM: [43:15](#) Right um, so for me it was definitely easier to learn English just because I was going to school here. So I was just surrounded by English the whole time.

NH: Yeah!

AM: Um, I remember it being really hard. Um having, so I went in here when I was, first grade, um (*laughs*) so... um, having like, spelling tests was hard to me, um really like, two really distinctive things I remember from when I was just like not being able to spell because or the like I remember having to spell "the" and I would spell "da" and I just wouldn't understand why there was a "t-h-e", I just, I was like, (*smiling*) how does this work? Like English is so weird!

NH: It is! You're not wrong. It is (*laughs*).

AM: Yeah "because" I remember spending like "b-e-c-u-z" like...

NH: Yeah!

AM: [44:10](#) That was just when I was learning how to spell everything. I was like, this is like crazy!

Like why isn't it just the way it sounds? Because, in Spanish you say the word and it's exactly how it sounds like you spell it the way it sounds. (NH: Yeah). Um, so that was definitely, difficult for me. Um, I remember there was a kid in my class who did speak Spanish, so, um, they did pair us up together to kinda have him as an aid and help me kind of navigate through learning English. I did, have help from some friends um, that were my age and were also Latino. Um, I know my teacher, um, she was white. Um, but I remember like she did her best to try and incorporate me into her class um, I remember like she used to kinda like say some Italian words to me (*laughs*) in an attempt to kind of like—

NH:

Connect yeah!

AM: [45:00](#) Yeah, good idea um, it was very similar to Spanish, so I understood what she was trying to say. Um, but I did learn fairly quickly um, by second grade I, I could, um, navigate pretty well through English. There were like a few words here and there (NH: Yeah) in a couple of grammar mistakes, but (NH: Yeah) it was definitely a lot more, much better than when I first started.

NH: [45:23](#) Yeah! Um, how about your, like your parents?

AM: [45:32](#) Um, yeah. So—

NH:

Wilson and Patty!

AM: (*Both laughing*) Wilson and Patty yeah! I know it was much more difficult for them just because they were older.

NH:

Yeah...

AM:

So my mom and her first job was as a waitress, um, as a hostess I believe actually, so she had to learn English for that purpose. Um, it was difficult for her to, but she found her way through... Um my dad, he learned through a church we had, um, so there's like an ESL [English Second Language] program, so that's how he learned English and now he's actually an English teacher at that same program, which was (NH: Oh Wow!) the coolest thing. How like he was a student and now he's a teacher teaching other how, adults how to speak English. Um, so yeah...

NH: [46:21](#) I was wondering if the church is gonna come up because I was like, I feel like a lot of programs like that, at least in Ashburn and Leesburg, are based out of the churches.

AM: [46:32](#) Yeah so. (NH: Yeah) There was a church like directly in front of our house and we actually really became involved in that Church's (NH: Oh Wow!) ESL program. At that church, he's the, I want to say international missions pastor person there. So that's crazy how the roles have switched from when we first got here to now. Yeah.

NH: [46:54](#) Yeah. Wow. Um, I also, I know that this was a while back, but I remember the restaurant title, um, of the Spanish restaurant in Harrisonburg—

AM: Oh yeah?

NH: It's La Morena.

AM: Oh OK!

NH: *Really* good—

AM: I'll be sure to visit (*laughs*).

NH: Really good! (*laughs*) Um, OK (AM: *coughs*) so great. So um, so great um, that also brings me to this idea though, cause like you had to learn English, your family had to learn English relying on, um, well not relying on but utilizing like resources that you had around you, you know, um, with friends and the church. Um, it just brings me back to this idea of assimilation and I'm kind of. (AM: Mhm) Yeah, um, I'm kind of wondering if you can speak to that?

AM: Um, how some was for me?

NH: Yeah! Like what, um, what do you make of this like idea?

AM: [47:43](#) Um, so for me, assimilating was very weird um, cause I remember having a different culture back there. Um, so like when we greet each other, we greet each other with a hug and like—

NH: Yeah!

AM: [47:57](#) A kiss on the cheek and that's like completely normal. So when I got here and that wasn't the norm, it felt a little weird (*laughs*). Um also just like, clothing wise, um, it

wasn't much different, but I realized here that like *(pause)* having brand names was very like important...

NH: Yeah like a status symbol.

AM: Yeah, like a status symbol um, you had to wear like certain clothes, seem a certain way. So it was very hard for me in the beginning. Um, *(pause)* it's become a lot easier now I guess just cause it's not as important to me like, or to anybody else for that matter. I feel like, people were just a lot more judgmental back then and now they're a lot more understanding. Um, but that's not so much *(mumbles)*...

NH: [48:49](#) Interesting, yeah, I know, um, cause the class that I'm taking for this whole project is Latinos in US history and one of the things that we're learning about right now is that, um, assimilation came through in like the 1920, you know, like kind of way back but not really less than 100 years ago, (AM: Yeah) um, came through in terms of diet and like eating (AM: Wow...) in like kind of stuff like that, and I'm wondering if um—

AM: I could see that...

NH: Like, that relates to you at all. Yeah?

AM: [49:20](#) Same thing as well. Um, so when I first got kinda, hip with the culture thing, um, I know like, back in Guatemala like a normal thing, was that like a sandwich with like um, like refried beans like that was a normal thing. If I had that here, it would seem like, I guess like kind of disgusting to other kids (NH: Yeah). There's just certain foods that are just so different from like American foods, or United States food *(both laugh)*...

NH: [49:48](#) Virginia foods... *(laughs)*

AM: Yeah it's like you know, the kids would have like Lunchables or like ham and cheese sandwiches, peanut-Oh! *(Excited)* Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches I didn't even know existed until I got here—

NH: Was probably the best *(laughs)*.

AM: It was like the weirdest combination when I first got here. I was like, “What!?! That doesn't make” *(laughs)*—

NH: *(Quickly)* That doesn't make sense!

AM: That doesn't make sense um...

NH: Are peanuts not a big thing in Guatemala?

AM: [50:13](#) They *are* just not in like, the peanut butter form. (NH: Oh!) It's weird actually. (NH: Huh!) Like we get peanut- like when we go back we get like requests to bring peanut butter.

NH: [50:25](#) That's something I've heard—

AM: Because there's no peanut butter—

NH: Yeah... Something I, one of my friends, um, is Peruvian and she says that a lot (AM: Yeah!) is that she'll bring her...

AM: [50:34](#) Yeah there's no like, peanut butter which, is kinda weird, but... (NH: Huh...) There just isn't that kind of thing (*giggles*).

NH: [50:41](#) That's so strange... (AM: Yeah) um... Cool. So yeah, we just talked about assimilation. So, um, I guess we're kind of coming up towards the end of like this whole interview shindig. Um, I'm really wondering about your take on current events? Um, and so how do you kind of feel about the current climate towards immigration in the US?

AM: [51:12](#) Um, so I feel like people are really here like left or right.

NH: [51:15](#) Yeah. Polarized. Yeah.

AM: [51:18](#) And I feel like the- the climate is definitely like very tense right now, um, with that, um, but I see where some people come fr- like where they're op- like their strong opinions come from as far as not letting immigrants come in. Um, I guess like illegal immigrants, like I would see why they would think they'd bring crime and stuff like that, but it's such a small percentage that I just believe it just shouldn't be such a, like there shouldn't be such backlash against them because I know not just Latino immigrants but from different countries are just coming here to seek like refuge and just a safe environment to be in. Um, so I just definitely think that immigration shouldn't be like, we shouldn't be trying to restrict it. I think maybe there should be like just certain. I guess like policies like to make sure those who are trying to bring like crime in or bad things into the US, like there should just be something to I guess filter against

that, but also let those who want just somewhere safe to be or just have a better life than what they had back in their own home countries to be able to adjust.

NH: [52:37](#) Yeah. Like have a path to citizenship. Yeah (AM: Yeah).
Um, do you identify as a US citizen?

AM: Not yet I—

NH: (*Repeating*) Not yet—

AM: I become a citizen of this year. (*Giggles*) Yeah.

NH: (*Gasps*) That's so exciting!

AM: Yes, it is exciting—

NH: Yes!

AM: We're gonna start the process and—(*laughs*).

NH: Good luck! Yes!

AM: Thank you!

NH: Oh my gosh, that's incredible! Good luck with everything!

AM: Yeah, thank you!

NH: Wow! So I feel like this is like- I'm an International Affairs major, right. (AM: Oh really) and um Latin America is my concentration. And so one of my immediate thoughts is recognizing that Mexico has stricter immigration policies towards Central America than the US does. And I'm kind of wondering if you would like be able to speak to Mexico-Guatemala relations, but it's also like this is just (AM: Right) pure curiosity from my end. So like...

AM: [53:30](#) I actually don't know a lot of the relations. I do know like a like small fragment of history that there was like, some like conflict between Mexico and Guatemala that, um they're really close and I know like, I know the bottom part of Mexico is supposed to be a part of Guatemala but there was like this whole fight over it about whether it would go to Guatemala or Mexico. Um, so there's just, there's still somewhat a ton of tension over that because there is some like um, historical landmarks in that tip of Mexico which

we would have argued would be from Guatemala, like part of Guatemalan culture.

NH: Do you mean like the Yucatan Peninsula? (AM: Yeah) And stuff like that?

AM: Yeah stuff like that. Um, so there's still some tension towards that. I know even like Mexicans, like Mexican people and Guatemalan people just like have tension just because of that, which I think is weird because even if they don't directly relate to that, like they have that overarching like conflict I guess

NH: [54:40](#) Yeah, when you, I don't know, do you still feel that tension in the US? Like when you meet other Latinos that are like from Mexico?

AM: From Mexico?

NH: Yeah.

AM: [54:46](#) I don't actually like, I just- I think it's weird that they have that with tension, I meet people that are Mexican and I don't have that like resentment towards him because it wasn't something that was in their hands.

NH: Yeah!

AM: It was something that wasn't in my hands either (NH: Yeah). So, um, and it was in the past too and it doesn't relate to the person they are either um, so...

NH: [55:07](#) That's so interesting. Cool. Thank you for sharing that. I know that that was like a very like random question (*both laugh*). Um, okay. So I guess since we are kind of coming up on time, um, I have two questions that I really want to ask you. Um like, I know the future is hard to visualize, (AM: Yeah) but um, what are you most looking forward to in the future? And this could be like personal life, like citizenship status things, JMU, Johns Hopkins like (*giggles*).

AM: [55:44](#) Yeah, um, so my biggest like thing is Hopkins actually, I just, I can't, it's a big pressure, um definitely now I just can't even imagine what I'm going to do to try and get in there. Um, but I'm definitely excited. Even if I don't go to Hopkins, just going through medical school and seeing where my career goes (NH: Yeah), definitely excited about

what I'm gonna do and just- I just hope to be the kind of surgeon to like, I really want to do research and be innovative. Um, I don't just wanna be like a regular surgeon that just does regular stuff I don't know (NH: *laughs*). I just want to like, I kinda wanna make an impact, um, on the medical world in some way when I get to that point. So I'm really excited.

NH: [56:30](#)

And I think what you were talking about how like in Guatemala when you greet people, it's so much more personal. Like you bring that to the medical field just by virtue of like who you are, so it's like you're definitely gonna have an impact I think. And it's really valuable to have medical professionals that are more personable, you know? Yeah (*sighs*). I'm so excited for you (AM: *giggles* Yeah). Um, okay. So my last um, question is looking back, kind of like on your lived experience, um, if you could give your younger self one piece of advice, what would it be?

AM: [57:03](#)

I think it would be to just, just like, do what you like, (NH: Yeah) don't restrict yourself just because somebody doesn't like it or somebody that you want to like you, like whether it's a friend or a boy, like like just do whatever you want. Well, not whatever you want like crazy ways, (NH: *laughs*) but you know, you wanna to wear like certain clothes, like go ahead where them or where your hair a certain way like um, don't worry about it. I remember as a kid like a skin tone was a big part of like, um, how like I perceived myself. Like I just, I saw everyone with lighter skin (NH: Yeah...) and I just remember wanting lighter skin. So I- that was one thing I could tell myself too is like, don't worry about it. Like it's something so small. It's not how people see you either so.

NH: And also your skin's beautiful.

AM: (*Smiling*) Yeah thank you!

NH: [57:57](#)

You're like glowing, (*both laugh*) I just need you to know, but yeah, that's incredible. Just telling you younger yourself to—

AM: Appreciate what you have—

NH: Do you!

AM: Appreciate yourself!

NH: Yeah, yeah! Well um your story's just invaluable. Thank you so much—

AM: Oh, thank you!

NH: For being able to sit down and talk with me. Um, I guess, what time is it now? Alright! It is 10:04. Thank you so much, Amy.

AM: Alright, thank you!