

Raul:

So you said in your biography that you left your family without saying goodbye? Do you feel like it shaped your family's immigrant experience, because of that?

Ms. Pascale 0:13

Um, I would say so I think it you know, we had to leave a lot of, like things behind not just like, not like objects, but like just a lot of like, emotional like, you know, I know, one of the things that we had was like a giant chest of photographs. And we tried to bring it with us, and it was lost. And so, you know, it's that idea of like, you feel like disconnected. And, you know, as met, while there are many family members, like most of our family members understood that we just kind of one day we were there and the next day, we were not kind of thing. Because Cuba is such a, it was such a tumultuous time, and people were leaving and people staying and all that there were family members who, you know, kind of resented that we got it out, and they didn't. So yeah, I think it definitely gave some, like shape. I mean, I was very young, I was a baby when we left. So I don't have as much of a connection to that. But I know that it affected the way that my family interacted with, like my extended family, you know, kind of the stories of like, oh, when you know, growing up, my cousin's would come over, like, every day, and we would just like, you know, we would all just be together. And now it's like, it was just, it's just my immediate family. We never had, you know, like, my mom didn't keep in contact with the cousins as much, and it just kind of changed our dynamic with them.

Raul 1:48

And on your way to New Jersey, you said, you cried all the way there. Can you infer something from that, like, was the main purpose you cry? Do you remember?

Ms. Pascale 1:56

I don't really know. I think it was just, I was like, and I was very young, I was a toddler. And I think part of it was just the fact that, you know, I'd never been on such a long bus ride before. So you know, it was because we took the bus from Florida to New Jersey. So it was, you know, like, two days because we made, stop or whatever. And it was like a day, or a day and a half or something. And so I think it was just like that, like, I didn't know what was going on or where we were. And I hate the cold. So who knows, maybe it got colder. And I was like, I don't want this was

Raul 2:35

Everything was just happening so fast. Yeah, it's been hard to adjust. So growing up, what was your American dream, like, during your teenage years?

Ms. Pascale 2:44

American dream? That is quite a question. I mean, I don't think my American dream was particularly anything unique. I think, you know, I want what every human being wants, you know, the white picket fence. You know, I've always loved animals, I'm really into animals. So I kind of always wanted to just have like, a, like, a, like a little rescue, like, as part of my home. But I also,

you know, I find it interesting that, like, I, back then I didn't consider, like, how I wanted to, like, keep my community in my life. Because it's like I had grown up in Union City. And anyone who's ever been to Union City knows that it's like a different country. It's not the US. Yeah, there are just so many Hispanic and Spanish people there that it's a very different vibe. And I don't think I realized that, like, having left there and moving to other places, it's a very different culture, very different way of functioning, and, and so like, I didn't consider when I was younger, that the rest of you know, the United States, or even just New Jersey was very different from where I grew up. So, you know, I want a little bit of a combination of that, like, I don't want to lose that. You know, I don't want to lose the Union City. But I also wanted to go to different, I'm not a city person. You know, I like the suburbs. So I thought I wanted like, you know, a union city suburb.

Raul 4:31

So like, what challenges did you face as in like, trying to divide like, have the best of both worlds? What challenges are the challenges you face?

Ms. Pascale 4:39

I think one of the biggest challenges that I face like my whole life, is that I am a white passing Hispanic. So yeah, yeah, the way I speak the way I look. A lot of folks don't know that Spanish was my first language if you know, I still speak it very fluently. You know, I sometimes think in Spanish, even though I'm more used to English, but you know it, I wasn't exposed to English until I was a toddler, like, so I was Spanish up until a certain point. And then, even then I wasn't necessarily like, at home, we were all talking Spanish. And I didn't really learn English until I went to daycare or pre K. And so we're just still very young. So I learned English very fluently, and well, but, you know, it's still one of those things where a lot of folks don't realize that, which is fine. But it kind of makes it difficult to totally integrate into any community. Because, you know, like, I, I grew up with the, with the immigrant experience, but, you know, I don't, I don't look like an immigrant. I'm saying that in air quotes, by the way, I don't look air quotes, like an "immigrant", which, you know, can make people can make people feel like, that gives them an excuse to be racist, like, around me, like, you know, a lot of people will be like, oh, you know, like, those white people tend to be able to make like, racist remarks around me. And they think that that's okay. Because, oh, well, I'm with a Hispanic person. So I'm allowed to be like racists. But like, they wouldn't do that if the person was a lot more tan or something. Yeah. And so it's it was a very interesting experience. I have a lot of, you know, people being like, oh, you know, like, Hispanic people are lazy. Except Cubans are like,

Raul 6:46

Yeah, right exactly. Always leave like you're apart.

Ms. Pascale 6:50

So it. So it was, it's always been interesting. Another interesting thing is that when growing up in Union City, most folks, again, white passing Hispanic, a lot of folks thought I was American. So, you know, they would try to talk smack about me in Spanish. And I'd be able to say, you know, retort to that. But as soon as I left Union City, I stopped being as white. You know, like, it's one of those things where, in comparison. So for example, my my husband and I went to a conference

in Minnesota a few years ago. And even though and even though like, you know, we were at the university, the University of SIBO, you know, we went out into the town to, like, have dinner and look around, and people would stare at me, and I felt so out of place. And I'm like, it's so weird, because I'm not used to this. I'm not used to being, you know, not, not just another one. Yeah. And I really like it, I edit it. So it's interesting, because, like, here, I'm very white. But if you go to the Midwest, I'm not. So it kind of like, you know, it kind of shows you the dynamic of you know, just because I mean, you know, I speak without an accent in both languages, because I like language so I've always been very interested in that but not because like, I'm like, all I have to be like, you know, American and I haven't I just really liked language. I like sounds I like, trying to figure out like, you know, how to pronounce things correctly. So it has, like, nothing to do with like, the cultural aspect, but a lot of people will assume that I'm like, trying to, like, erase my Hispanic heritage or something, which is absurd. Because I you know, I'm very proud of being Cuban and Spanish. So.

Raul 8:36

Yeah, I can relate it's like, you look like compared to my family, like, compared to all my sisters. They're tan and I don't know, I'm just white. Yeah. And everyone thinks, Oh, you're not really Hispanic or something. Like you're not a real Hispanic. Yeah, just like I don't understand the mindset. Yeah, just, I don't know.

Ms. Pascale 8:59

Listen man I eat my arroz con frijoles just like everyone else. Just like go away.

Raul 9:07

So you said you were a dreamer, in your mini biography. So did you experience any fear as a dreamer growing up?

Ms. Pascale 9:15

Um, as I'm sorry.

Raul 9:18

Did you experience any fear Growing up like, oh, just like any discrimination or like you wouldn't achieve any of your goals?

Ms. Pascale 9:26

Yeah, I mean, it that's kind of hard to tell you really like like, I mean, obviously, I must have been, you know, I know growing up like when I was probably like, first year high school, that kind of thing. I know that there were some kids in the town next, the next town over who were more wide and I know they would, they would call me like, like a spic and things like that. And I know like stuff like that affected me, but I didn't know what affected me at the time. thought it was weird because, you know, there's, but you know, and and being Hispanic yourself, you kind of know that Hispanic people are racist within themselves. Um, so it's one of those things where it's like, I've had to kind of adjust the way I think about other people and the way that I consider that they think about me. Um, so, I mean, I would say my, my greatest challenges, in the sense

of like, you know, of that is that I have a lot of mental health issues. I'm also autistic, but I wasn't diagnosed until I was an adult. Because a lot of women and Hispanic people tend to get overlooked by the, by the American health care system. So a lot of times, you know, when some things that like, I could say, like, oh, you know, I, I don't feel well, they'll just be like, you know, whatever, just keep going, you're fine. Or, you know, so it was something that, um, you know, that that's probably one of the bigger things that I think was affected by, by me.

Raul 11:15

So you said, you loved art when you were younger so, has your immigrant experience shaped you as an artist? And if so how?

Ms. Pascale 11:23

That is a good question. Um, you know, I think, I think so I think not necessarily the content of my art, but I think part of you know, that, that being feeling in between because of like, the way I look versus the way you know, I feel and this and that like and that idea of like, I think that kind of introverted me a little bit so that like I would, I wasn't sure, like where to fit in. So I would go to my art, because it was some way to, like, express myself and show to others, you know, what I was thinking and feeling and all that. So, I think yeah, I think it has definitely has had influence on that.

Raul 12:09

Do you still feel like you have an artistic mindset in you?

Ms. Pascale 12:13

I still I still, yeah, art and all that.

Raul 12:17

So you have a creative family life you enjoy. So what's your emotional relationship to Cuba now? Do you still miss it?

Ms. Pascale 12:27

So we actually went to visit it right the year before the pandemic. So 2019 for the first time in 30 years. And again, I left as a baby, so I had very, very limited, you know, I just remembered colors. I didn't actually remember Cuba at all, um, but it was still very emotional. You know, I went with my mother, my, my husband was American. And my grandfather, so he had, my grandfather is also autistic, and he fixates on Cuba, Cuba, like his life and Cuba, which makes sense. He, you know, he spent most of his life in Cuba. So, you know, like, he's always been, like, you know, he writes novels about his time in Cuba when he was younger, and he's just very, like, focused on it. So it was a very emotional trip. You know, because it is the first time he'd been back in 30 years. And unfortunately, my grandmother had passed away, like a couple of years prior to when we went. So it was also kind of that strange feeling of going back to Cuba without her. Because she was also obviously, every one of my family is Cuban. So it was like, we all came from there. And so it was like, it was really interesting. It's very sad, because Cuba is a gorgeous, absolutely beautiful place. But everyone is starving. And there's not you know, we

went as you know, we went to visit family so we weren't like staying in like a hotel or anything we were staying at, like a I think it was like not an Airbnb, but kind of like that where like locals will, like, read out like certain areas to try to get a little more money and stuff. So we stayed a block away from where my family lives, because we didn't want to impose on them. And, you know, but we still kind of went as Americans like people with money. And even so we still had a hard time getting more than one or two meals a day. Which I think is insane. Like, you know, because I understand that, you know, maybe if they have limited resources and this and that, but like we couldn't even find like, like, like the grocery stores are empty, like they have two or three things on the shelves. Like it's very sad right right now, so. So it was like a bittersweet experience and you know, it kind of I think like I think my my attachment to Cuba is very like like hot and cold. Like I, I have a hard time with it because it just like I can't think about Cuba without thinking about, you know, my extended family like not having the medicines they need and not having the food they need. So it can be rough, because you know, I have friends or co workers who are like, Oh, I went to Cuba, it was such a fun time because they took you know, they took the ferries. The thing is like, while we were there, we my family was from Havana. So we weren't very far from like now where the tourist area is. So when we went to go visit the old house like my grandparents old house, we passed by that like area, and it's just so manicured and built up and there's like restaurants everywhere, there's actually food there. And and it's like crazy because like the the cruise ships come in, the people hang out in this, like two blocks that are like beautiful and manicured. And then they all get back on the cruise ship and leave so they don't see like, you know, the house is falling apart, like a block away. And like, you know, all the stray dogs. And so it was it was it was interesting. So it's interesting, because it's like people are like, Oh, how was your trip to Cuba were like, depressing. And they're like, why? Like they don't understand. So it's it's yeah.

Raul 16:20

So yeah, cuz I went to El Salvador. Because also my family's from, and I think it was like 2021 yeah. And it was very, it was beautiful. Like you said, the country is beautiful. But it's like, it's very depressing. Like sometimes it's like some areas you see. Yeah, very poor. And it's also like very dangerous as well as the city. You see, like, not in the city, but like, the other areas of El Salvador.

Ms. Pascale 16:48

Yeah, like southern areas.

Raul 16:51

You just see, like gang members, and you don't want to.

Ms. Pascale 16:55

Oh that's horrible. That's the one good thing about Cuba is that it's pretty safe. Just because everyone is equally poor. So, you know, it's not really a problem are anything. But I yeah, I mean, it's just sad. I mean, we did see when we saw we visited our family in Havana, but my grandfather also had family on it, but Rio which is like, deep, not deep into Cuba, because Cuba is tiny, but like, you know, like, away from the city. So it was a gamble. It was like, you

know, rural rural area. And so there, they had more because they had farms. So they were growing their own food. And I mean, the thing is, like, according to their laws there, they have to give like, 90% of what they produce to the government. So obviously, they don't have a ton. But, you know, they still have like their own fruits and vegetables. They grow their own coffee, which was really nice. Yeah, but it was it was. And that area is also very beautiful. Because there's just not a lot of houses or anything. It's just like, gorgeous. But, but it's interesting to see like the difference. And it's also like, Well, why are these people doing so relatively well, while the people in the city are starving? And you'd think that the city would be doing kind of better because the economy usually in cities is hot, but you know, it's just, it's sad.

Raul 18:25

Yeah. It's very, like Central America and mostly Hispanic unconscious, like very sad to see. Because people don't know, like, understand. They're like, oh, it's beautiful, but like been on your family?

Ms. Pascale 18:37

Yes, I think they call it cruises. They just see like the little pretty places and then they don't realize that, you know, like, people are starving, like people are desperate. I know, I know, Puerto Rico is having a really rough time. And the worst part is that Puerto Rico is part of America. And nobody seems to know that you know, like, they they pretend that's not true. And it's horrible. Like, yeah, nobody wants to Yeah, I think DR is doing really bad too. And all those like South America like South America that I you know, it's like a nightmare. Like yeah, we're gonna go to Spain. Not that Spain's doing great. Doing better than all the rest of us.

Raul. 19:14

So um, you said that you were, forgive me if I'm saying this wrong La Lionacita. Yeah is there still some of that left?

Ms. Pascale 19:22

My husband helped me write that. So he loved that my family would say that Lionacita yeah, that's so the bus driver called me that because I cried the whole time and apparently I just had a lot of hair. So he just said I was like a little lion. But yeah.

Raul 19:41

Do you think there is a deeper meaning to that?

Ms. Pascale 19:43

It's interesting that that he would specifically say Lionacita because I'm also a Leo I was born in August so but I don't think he knew that I was just so. I guess you know, I guess the I do have Lion-like tendencies in some ways I can be, I can be rather, I don't want to say aggressive because I'm actually a very passive person. But like, you know, if I'm backed into a corner, I can be very assertive and aggressive. And, you know, I, like I'm, you know, whatever, do whatever you want, as long as you're not hurting anyone. But once you start hurting someone, I get angry.

I stand up for myself when I need to, and I stand up for others when I need to. And so I think maybe, maybe there is a little bit more to it than just me screaming on a bus.

Raul 20:43

And lastly, so you said you had a lot of animal in your household? Is there a purpose for that? Like, what do they represent to you?

Ms. Pascale 20:56

No, I've just, I always, I grew up with animals in my home. My grandmother always loved animals. My mom loves animals. My grandfather, tolerates he likes animals, but he's not like super, he's not he's just not an affectionate person in general. So he likes having them around, but he just doesn't really go out of his

Raul 21:15

Take care of them.

Ms. Pascale 21:17

Yeah, he takes care of, he's just he just doesn't really like, you know, he's just like, Yeah, can I gotta feed it? That's a that's was extent. But um, but you know, like my grandmother always, like, we would literally like we would be driving around, there'd be like a dog like walking. And my grandmother would be like, Oh, my God, we have to go breathe and find his home and his family. And we'd like, constantly bringing home like stray dogs and labor. And I know, my mom used to tell me stories from Cuba, where she had two big old fat pet rats. And so she would tell me all about that. And I now I have friends, because of those stories. And yeah, I've just always really, we've always really loved animals. My grandmother, again, I grew up with them telling me stories of the animals they had, and I feel like, and then we always had animals in our home, like dogs and birds and cats and stuff. And I just grew up with that atmosphere. So like, my grandmother would tell stories about how she had a goat in Cuba, named Bebe. And he would like follow her everywhere. And like, she would go to like the movies. And he would like go into the movie theater. And he would like bleep at the top of the stairs. And she'd be like, Bebe then he would come in and sit with her and one, they would watch the movie. And so you know, it's like a really cute, like, I always just really liked animals. I'm like that. reinforce that.

Raul 22:45

Lastly, is there anything else you want to add to share with us about your story?

Ms. Pascale 22:51

I don't know. Like, is there anything else you wanted to know? I don't know. I think you, I think we summed it up pretty well.

Raul 23:03

Has there been a point in life? Like you've been enlightened? by anything? Or?

Ms. Pascale. 23:09

Yeah, of course. I would hope everyone has enlightening moments of their life. But yeah, let me think. I mean, I think you know, I went to I started at Rutgers. Yeah. I did not do well, at Rutgers. I failed, like all of my classes. Yeah. I was going through a rough time with everything. But I think, you know, having that experience, you know, it was extremely upsetting and stressful. And, you know, the family were like, What are you doing, and I think like, as rough as that time was, it was very shaping about, like, to me as a person, because after that, I went to Hudson County Community College, and I got my Associates and then I went to Kean University, and I finished my, my Bachelor's with and luckily, you know, I had the support of my now husband, then boyfriend, who like, also helps, like, you know, between the two of us, we kind of helped each other grow. And, you know, I think having had that experience of, you know, like, I realized that like, I was like, trying to force myself to go through college because that's what everyone does, but I wasn't actually applying myself because it's not what I wanted. So, you know, it gave me the opportunity to do something else for a little bit and then go and go to college at my own pace, rather than having to be like, Okay, I got to do this in four years. I got to do this. I gotta do that. And I think it helped me kind of understand that I have more control over my life than I think I do. You know, like we there are definitely a lot of things that are out of control. well out of our own control, but there are a lot of things that, you know, especially, you know, you're an 18 year old, you're legally an adult, but you're not an adult. You know, you're, it's hard to understand that, oh, I can make my own decisions and I can, you know, use them to like, shaped my life. Like I don't have to. I don't have to conform. Like, I don't, you know, I'm only 18 years old, there's still a lot of life ahead. I do not have to finish school. Now, I do not have to do this now. You know, like, I can do things. Whenever and I, you know, I, I love seeing stories where you see, like, the 65 year old man started rock climbing for the first time. And now he climbed Mount Everest and you're like, you know what, like, I can do anything at any point in my life. I don't have to do it now. While I'm, you know, 18 or 19 or 20, or whatever. So, yeah, and I mean, I actually after I got my degree at Rutgers no, what, what am I trying to say? Oh, after I got my degree at Kean, yeah, I actually, I was working at Hudson County Community College. So after I got my degree at Kean, I decided that I wanted to start a pet sitting business. And I did it. You know, it's one of those and I had it for about five years, and I really enjoyed the work. It wasn't consistent, so I had to kind of find something else. But it was, you know, again, I don't know if I would have had the "cojones" to do that. But like you know if I haven't had to have that harrowing experience with a college so. Like I think that kind of ate some of my fear because I'm like well it can't get any worse.