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Dance and Culture

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Life History Interview

The person I chose to interview is one of my good friends Adrian. I work with Adrian at Golden Living, that is pretty much the only thing we have in common, that and we both live in Utah right now. We have separate cultures, backgrounds, and race, it was very interesting to get to know him better and where he came from. He hasn’t always live in Utah; he has only been living here for about ten years out of his forty two he has been alive. Adrian is a Hispanic male who used to live in Mexico City, Mexico. He has a different religion and belief than I do and it was interesting to see exactly where he stood and what he believed in.

In Mexico City it is a mixture of cultures, there is not one set culture there. This is, as Adrian called it, syncretism. Adrian went on to tell me the story of how it is a mixture culture. He said over 500 years ago Native Americans came and Spaniards so it became a clash of European cultures. Most were Latin Americans or Hispanics. Hispanic names and languages are based off of European names and religions. Now the Hispanics live where Native Americans lived many years ago. Still to this day there are lots of remains of ancient culture pyramids. When he told me this, I could not believe it! I thought that information was so neat, I had no clue that Mexico had pyramids and that they are still there. Adrian than told me that Native American language, religion, and the way of life is almost lost only a few people are left that practice this.

Adrian told me all about Mexico City and what it was like there. He said that Mexico City is a huge city. He even brought me this book that was all about Mexico City, I never would have guessed how huge it was. It covered both pages and it still didn’t show the entire city. The city is full of just buildings stacked right next to each other, no houses. The buildings and skyscrapers go on forever it looks like! It is much bigger than the Salt Lake Valley which is very surprising to me; I would not think Mexico City to be that big. American influence is huge in Mexico and Mexico City. Most of the people in Mexico City listen to the same music we do in the U.S. except for our country music. He said they don’t listen to much country and if they do it is not the same as ours here. American culture is a huge part. Now that he lives in America it has a greater influence on him. Because now he can see firsthand what American culture is and what we believe. A funny thing he discovered here was all the things he used to watch on the television or movies, he still watches here in the United States. He said he loves the American culture especially American hamburgers, and girls! I asked him why the girls? He responded by saying he has never seen more beautiful women anywhere else in the world. He said American women just have this look and way about them that separates them from any other female in the world, as far as he think/knows.

I asked Adrian who he considers to be his family. He said just like in Utah, his mom, dad, and brother are his family. He said as a family everybody contributes to the wellness of the family. The parents in the home support the children to go to school. Then at age 18 you go to work and contribute to the wellness of the house and the family. You would keep working until the time you get married. Most people never leave the house until you are married. As children you always help support the parents especially when they are aging. When parents can no longer live alone the kids take them home with them. It is extremely rare to see an elder person in a nursing home. Adrian said that when he moved here that was the first things he noticed was the nursing homes; he was so taken back by this that we would just let our parents go to a home. I think this is hilarious because a nursing home is now where me and Adrian work. So the place he was most against is now his income!

Children are the most valued in life then after the children the elderly are valued. He kept emphasizing that specific order, children then elderly. When you have children you give them everything. Things you never had in life and things you had but still want your children to have. You make sure they are well off and supported, it is your main goal as a parent. For the elderly all the people have a ton of respect and love, they are looked at as the wise group. They have age and wisdom that no one else has. He said that being a young adult is the hardest age to go through. It’s a time when you start working. To work in Mexico City you have to have at least three years of experience, but you don’t have that when you are just starting out. You also have to be younger than 30 to get a job, he said it is extremely hard to find a job over the age of 30. To get a job it is solely based on recommendation. I asked him about applications for jobs and he laughed in my face. He said that they don’t have applications down in Mexico he said you get a job off of recommendation of family and friends. It is all about who you know. I thought that was insane! Like what happens if you move? Just hope that your experience pays off or you recognize someone, which would be so hard, I completely see why young adult is the hardest age to endure.

Mexico City uses a lot of the same sayings we say in English, like “Okay” “Bye” they are both used in the exact same way. They also use a lot of the same brand names on things like “McDonalds” and “Blockbuster” and a lot of other stores and restaurants. Most movies and songs are in English too. In high schools and in Jr. highs they take and English class for six years, just like we take a different language normally Spanish. There are also a ton of private schools that teach English to students. Adrian told me why some Mexicans can’t talk, write, or read in English then when they come to the United States. He said it is because most of those Mexican people come here illegally because of the lack of opportunity in Mexico, like school. So that explains why most can’t speak English or else it is difficult to learn. Obviously the main language used in Mexico is Spanish. Another thing he said that really intrigued me was that English is a very hard language to learn. This just blows me away I guess because it’s the only thing I know, it makes me happy to know I know a hard language, even though I always wish I could speak a cooler language.

Communicating with gestures is very common, with family members it is very common to hug them then kiss them on the cheek. Once he said it I thought back when I worked at Dee’s in Ogden. I worked with a Hispanic lady and her uncles were the cooks, and every time they came in and saw each other they would do this. Another common one is shaking people’s hands when they come up to you, it’s a way to say hi and it’s respectful.

Contrary to what America thinks Mexican food is, is not the basic daily traditional food. Things like tacos and burritos are just fast food to even them. Mexican food is really spicy most of the time. One of the main dishes in meals has chicken, beef, or meatballs. Fish is not very popular in Mexican culture. Hamburgers are different than here; they have a chipotle sauce, which is sweet, sour, and spicy. Sometimes they even like to wrap hamburgers in bacon.

Of course before a mean you have to wash your hands, it is a rule to them. You have to be fully dressed while you eat, I started laughing when he said this but then he explain himself. He said even when you are on a vacation to the beach you have to put a shirt on at the table; you cannot be in your swim suite. He said if you see Americans in their swim suite its fine but if you ever see a Mexican it is not right, they should have a shirt on. I thought this was very different, but I can see where the respect comes in to play. They have a saying they say before they try the food they wish that the food will be good and nourish them. He said this is not like a prayer just a saying, kind of like “bon appetite”. If you have a guest in your home you don’t start eating until the guest takes the first bite. I would hate this if I was the guest I would rather everyone else to start eating, I would feel so nervous to know everyone is waiting on me.

In Mexico City Adrian said the dress is just like in the U.S. they typically wear jeans and a T-shirt, he said there is no real occasion they dress up for.

The main religion in Mexico is Catholicism. Catholicism is bases on a creator, God. In Mexico during Easter time most of the Catholic people do not eat any kind of meat but fish. Which is different from their normally, because like I said earlier they normally eat all meat but fish. This is a very spiritual ritual they practice. Adrian’s religion has been changed since being in contact with Mormons in Utah and their beliefs. Because of them he made the decision to get baptized eight years ago. Dancing is not used in his religion because he said it is just not part of it! He could not think of another way to put it.

In Mexico they celebrate a lot of the same holidays we do, but have a lot of their own too. On September 15 and 16 is when they celebrate their independence day from Spain. Something similar but not the same is November 1st and 2nd to celebrate the day of the dead. The day of the dead and Halloween is mixed together and is very similar. On the day of the dead everyone dresses up and turns into one big party. On December 12 is the biggest religious celebration for Lady of Guadalupe. People from all over the country go to the main church in Mexico City and dance all week different Native American dances. Then from that day Christmas time starts. Christmas season starts from December 12- January 6. Children get presents on Christmas day and January 6th. Something I thought was very different was all of their holidays are more than one day long; they celebrate for a longer period. Where our holidays are one day then they are done until the next holiday.

The last question I asked Adrian was how he has like the U.S. He said it’s wonderful and he loves it here. He loves the American culture and the people in it. After ten years he still thinks this is an amazing place! He has had discrimination though from older people. He has been told “you people” “Mexican” “brown guy” “you don’t speak English, comprende”. He feels like he has not been set back by his race in any way though. He does everything he wants to do that he sets his mind to.

I had a really great time interview Adrian! I got to know him on a lot more on personal level. I also got to learn a ton more about not only Mexico but Mexico City. I learned that just because he is a different race and comes from a different culture people mostly except him here in Utah. I also learned that we as Americans should not judge and look down on Mexico; they look up to us a ton and watch everything we do. That should be a major complement to us as a nation. The older generation might have a harder time, but once they get to know him and know he is trying to make a better difference here, they lighten up to him. I did change some opinions about Mexicans from interviewing him. I now know who the real illegal immigrants are and how to tell them apart. The ones, who are actually trying, do want to be here for a better opportunity they might not have gotten in Mexico. I didn’t have to harsh of feelings of them before but this just lightened it up that much more. We need to accept them and their culture they come from! Everyone has something neat to add to the table.