

Paulina Vazquez Interview
with Abby Huggins
October 6, 2017
Whitesburg, KY

00:04 Abby Huggins: This is Abby Huggins. Today is October 6, 2017. I'm in Whitesburg, Kentucky with Paulina Vazquez, Vazquez.

00:16 Paulina Vazquez: [laughs] Either way.

00:18 AH: Vazquez. To do an oral history interview related to the Food & Dance Trail. So, Paulina, could you start by you just introducing yourself.

00:28 PV: Yeah. My name is Paulina Vazquez or Vazquez. A lot of people get it mixed up. I'm twenty-six years old. I am originally from Omaha, Nebraska, which is where I was born and raised. And I've been in Whitesburg about two years now. Yeah [laughs].

00:50 AH: I'd love to hear more about who you consider to be your people and the place that you were raised.

00:57 PV: Yeah. So, my parents are both immigrants from Mexico. My dad is from Jalisco in Mexico and he's from a pretty small town, actually. And he moved here, he's the oldest of nine. So, he moved here, to the United States, when he was about nineteen years old because there was a packing house job available. And he really just didn't want to live in Mexico anymore. And he was like, "I need to go do something with my life." You know there's not very many opportunities in small town, in this particular small town in Mexico. So, he was one of the first people in his family, I think, to get to the U.S. And then my mom is the youngest of six and she came here with her family when she was about two. So, I guess, I and most of my cousins are first generation. And so that was really interesting growing up in a house like that. So, I guess, when I was about four or five, I started dancing ballet folklórico Mexicano, which is traditional Mexican folk dance. But, it's also kind of tied in with ballet. So, it's been a long line in my family, it's just what my family kind of does. So, my aunts have done it. My mom has done it, my grandma's done it. And I don't really know why. It started with my grandma I think. It might have started with her mom. But, it's just kind of, they all love to dance. They're all from Mexico. So, I mean, it's something that was very much a part of their daily life. And for me, it was more like, it was a part of my family's life. Because, you know, I didn't wear traditional dresses growing up and I didn't, you know, I never lived in Mexico, so. And I barely know perfect Spanish. So, it's been interesting being this secondary, I've had like a secondary appreciation for it. But again, like I said, it's something that we just did when I was five, you just kind of started to dance. And all my cousins did it, so, if you wanted to stay in dance, you stayed in it. If you didn't, then you could quit [laughs]. So, my aunt was actually the teacher. My aunt, my mom's oldest sister. And, her life's mission was to open up a museum, a Latin American museum. And she did and that is still a thing in Omaha, Nebraska. It's called El Museo Latino. I think it's actually one of the only Latin American museums in the Midwest. So, that's still a thing. And she also loves dance, so she was a dance teacher. And we would have practices in this dark dungeon basement and it grew into this cool group. The group was called Chomari. And it was just something we did. And as I got older, I was like, "Oh man,

this is not really something I just do, this is actually really cool, what I'm doing." I never really appreciated it until I got older. So then when I got into my teens, I quit because I had reached a point in my life where I was like, "I need to distance myself from being Mexican." I had this whole identity crisis happen where all of my friends were white. I went to a primarily white school and I didn't really know Spanish and my dad's side of the family, there were a couple people that were like, "You don't know Spanish, you're not really Mexican. That's so sad." Kind of making me feel really weird. And so I felt like I need to distance myself from it in order to give myself some time to kind of figure out who I was and maybe place myself, I'm more of a white person than a Mexican person. Which was weird because I felt like really grossed out at my heritage and I was kind of ashamed of it and kind of ashamed of dancing. This was about when I was fifteen. So, actually, up until maybe last year, I think I went to Omaha to visit for a couple months, or maybe it was this year? And my aunt had asked me if I wanted to teach dance for a little while, while I was home. And I was like, "Oh man, I haven't danced in a while, maybe I will." And, so I did and something happened. It just, I felt so many emotions, things floated back. I was like, "Oh my god, this whole time, I was totally grossed out at this this thing that was so ingrained in me, in my blood and I loved it. And it's my family and it's everything about me. And I was so upset at it for so long and now here I am, really appreciating it and loving it and wanting to do it every single day." And so, I guess that's kind of my little sob story [laughs] of how I fell back in love with dance. It's so important.

05:49 AH: Can you describe more of what the dance is like that you do?

05:53 PV: Yeah, of course. So, Mexican folk dance is, when you hear it, most people are like, "Oh that's the dance with the big, beautiful, colorful dresses." Which is true. The cool thing about Mexican folk dance is that every single state has a different style and a different dress that you wear and a different type of music. That's why I loved it so much because it gave me variety. I'm a person that gets really bored really easily. So, just learning dances from different states was so cool. So, traditional Mexican folk, you have a shoe that kind of resembles a tap shoe. You have nails kind of nailed into the toe and into the heel of it. So, it gives you a little bit more of a duller sound than a tinging sound from a tap shoe. So, a lot of the steps are very percussive, drummy, with the beat. And then there are also more ballet, formal kind of types of dances within it. So, you wear either ballet shoes or you know. So, it can vary for different states, but, yeah, if you ever get a chance to check it out, YouTube it [laughs]. It's really cool. Another thing I really enjoyed, when I was growing up, I really didn't care for the music too much. There's the mariachi music that you dance to, there's the slow waltzy type of music. I never cared for them until I got older. And now I listen to it freely on my headphones when I'm going grocery shopping [laughs]. It's crazy.

07:32 AH: So, returning to music and dance.

07:34 PV: Yeah.

07:38 AH: As a part of identity.

07:40 PV: Totally. Totally. It's totally who I am and who I was and it's been there my whole life and it's cool. [laughs] I love it.

07:55 AH: And I saw you dance the other night at the Feminist Fling.

08:02 PV: Yeah, that was fun.

08:03 AH: And you did two or three very different dances.

08:06 PV: That's true. Yeah. So I did three. I chose to do three dances from different states. The first one was from the state of Guerrero and that I used a bandana or a handkerchief to kind of twirl around as I danced and I loved those dances. They're so fun. More basic steps with your bandana. And the second one I did was from the state of Veracruz. And that is, they're all my favorites. But that one is traditionally danced with a beautiful white laced dress. I didn't have the full costume for that, but, oh man, it's gorgeous. You have a fan. There's one that you dance with a lit candle on your head. Actually, that dance, you actually dance with a lit candle on your head, but I [laughs] wasn't feeling super confident about that that night. And then, the last one I danced was called La Llorona. And La Llorona is the story of a woman. It's a Mexican folktale of a woman who drowned her children and then drowned herself. It's very awful. But, it's something you grew up hearing. "If you sleep with your feet out of the covers, La Llorona's going to come and get you." [laughs] Horrible things that our parents told their kids. But, that one was fun since it was October and the Day of the Dead is coming up in November. I figured it'd be cool to dance as a sugar skull witchy woman who's drowned her children [laughs]. Spooktastic. Yeah.

09:41 AH: So, most of your knowledge of this comes from your aunt. And she learned dances from all different states. Is that common to have a knowledge of all these different styles?

09:53 PV: Yeah. It's pretty common. If you're in a group, a Mexican folk dance group, most of the time, the teacher is somebody that has done this their whole life. That has studied it for a long time. Most of the time. I was so lucky to have this aunt who, and still am, I call her for a lot of info if I need it. She is somebody that, she's an encyclopedia. She went to college for art history and she's just an encyclopedia of knowledge. So, she would travel to Mexico a lot and she actually has a really good friend who, his name is Professor Rubio, and he was my dance teacher for like summers. He would come in for the state of Chihuahua is where he's based out of. And he was just this hard core, he's in his, I don't know, 70s and he's just made of muscle and made us sweat all summer. He was like a drill sergeant. It looks pretty when you're doing it. And it's so rewarding and gorgeous and it looks really easy. But it's so difficult. I mean, we trained for years, every single day. So, it is, it's a sport. It's something that you have to train yourself to be really good at. And, actually, this last visit, when I went, I spent some time with my aunt. And she, it was different talking to her as like a teacher to a teacher. Rather than like her niece who was a student, you know? So, she brought out all of her binders, "This is this state and this is typical dresses, this is typical steps." I mean, she had binders that were super thick of just history and information. And I was just blown away at the hours and hours and hours of work that she puts into this. She makes all of her own head pieces. My grandma sews all the dresses. I mean, it's a family, it's work. So, it's more than just, yeah, she knows a little bit. No, she knows everything. It's insane. So, that's something that really motivated me was going back and realizing that this woman who has taught me her whole life has just all of this love for it. It made me love it even more. So yeah.

12:11 AH: Did you say you're teaching dance?

12:15 PV: So, when I was home, I did some teaching with the young kids. And I love kids so it was totally right up my ally. So, when I came here, my fiancé, soon to be husband like in two weeks,

it's just insane. But his aunt Carla Gover, she is somebody that is extremely motivating and wonderful as well. And she is very much involved in the music scene here and the teaching scene here. She does old time music. She plays old time music. She also does a lot of flatfooting. And she dances. And she's a Spanish teacher now. Anyways, we've always had this connection since I've known her because I knew that I wanted to be like her, I wanted to get paid to be an artist. Do the thing I love to do in my life and not have to just sit in front of a desk forever. So, she has been a huge mentor in my life. And it was funny because we were driving somewhere one day, just her and I in the car. And, she was talking about how she's been wanting to do some sort of project involving Appalachian culture and Latin American culture. Both cultures are something that she's so passionate about. And she said now more than ever during this presidential situation it's so important to talk about it and to really show the connections in between cultures. And she was like, "Man I just would wish, you know if you want to sing or blahblahblah," she was just like, you know, "If we want to do something." And I was like, "Carla, I don't know if you know this, but I've danced Mexican folk dance my whole life." She was like, "What?" She stopped the car. She was like, "This is insane." So, in that moment we were both like, "Ok, we're doing it. There's no other - we have to. It would be stupid of us to not join forces and do something really cool." So, I jumped on that wagon and we've been kind of molding this, it's a performance piece, it's called Cornbread and Tortillas. And ideally she is wanting to travel all over the country and do something like that with me, her, her daughters. She's got, she's really great friends with this band called Appalatin, who also do a fusion between Appalachian music and Latin American music. So, it's awesome. Being around these artists who care about the same stuff I care about is so cool. You bounce ideas off each other. It's been so rewarding. So, with Cornbread and Tortillas, I guess, she's also giving me opportunity to talk to teachers in the area and teachers who are maybe wanting to incorporate something in the arts in their schools. And so, I've definitely gotten to talk to some teachers. I did something with Louisville. An elementary school in Louisville recently where I went in and did. They had a - it was like a world's art fair or something. And I went and I did some workshops with the kids. It's been so fun. It's been like my dream job. So, I'm exploring that a lot here. So, yeah.

15:26 AH: And y'all did a show in Hazard.

15:28 PV: We did a show in Hazard. Yeah. That was so fun too. What did you think? Did you like it? [laughs]

15:33 AH: Yes, it was beautiful. And the supper.

15:40 PV: Yeah, my gosh, I know.

15:43 AH: Yeah, but it's neat to hear stories and see these different styles of dance woven together.

15:50 PV: That is something really cool about every single time I get on stage and do something with Cornbread and Tortillas I'm pumped and I'm ready to go and there's this specific part in the show where Carla is flatfooting and doing her dance with her daughter. And then she kind of transitions into a solo and then drums come in and I come in. And, it's just her and I on stage just looking into each other's eyes and dancing our traditional dances. We talk about it all the time how it chokes us up every single time. It's not only just something that - it's not like a performance, it's truly what we are. And truly what we've been brought up doing. So, to share that as adults. To share that as teachers. To share that as humans. Two people who love each other so

much who have so many different - we have so many differences in our lives. And, we share this one common, beautiful thing, and it's so cool. So, yeah.

16:56 AH: One common beautiful thing.

16:56 PV: All the common beautiful things - we do like to eat; we like all the things. But this dance thing, it's crazy. Makes you feel so many things at once. Yeah.

17:13 AH: I heard you say a few minutes ago how wonderful it is to be working with artists who care about the same things you care about. Can you talk more about what that is?

17:24 PV: Yeah. Well, so, I touched on it earlier. This year and the last year, just basically the election and everything. I don't want to get too political. But it's been exhausting emotionally for, I think, a lot of my family. And myself. And, I was here during the election. And when I found out. And it, you know, it wasn't my outcome that I wanted. And it wasn't the kind of country that I wanted. But it's interesting because I do have a different perspective living here than maybe my family does. My family, they live in the city and they live in Omaha and they have never really lived in a place like this and I have. And so, it's interesting hearing both sides to it. The people who are happy about the election. The people who aren't. So, I don't have any hate in my heart, but it has put this. At first it was more like a, it kind of paralyzed me a bit. It made me feel like I wasn't loud enough or I couldn't do anything about it or there's nothing that I could possibly say to make this feel better. I just didn't feel like I had any say in anything. And then, as I kind of, it happened organically. You know, the whole getting together with Carla and thinking of other ways as how we can help the situation and how we can make families feel better about it rather than running around and screaming at people or crying every day. Or just, you know, maybe expressing it in a different way that's productive and also really cool to look at or to listen to. So, I guess my passion behind it is, has a lot to do with how I've been feeling the past couple of years, just kind of helpless. And so, what better way to bring people together and to laugh and to talk about connections than music and dance and things that we all love. And, food if food's involved it's awesome. Even my finance, he's a baker and his bread is insane. But, he's been learning a lot of traditional Mexican breads. It's so cool how we can just do this together and make stuff I've been growing up eating my whole life. And sharing it with people who maybe don't even know what it is, so it's all together, but my passion behind it is trying to talk about connections with maybe this culture that I'm also marrying into that, you know, Eli are cornbread and tortillas, we literally are. [laughs] So, it's cool. I have seen a lot of other artists with the same feeling about everything. About just, this is my way of voicing how I feel about it. Whether it's good, bad. Wherever you stand on it, it's just artists tend to be the ones to be this voice of reason during really horrible times. If you get people creative, you can release your emotions that way. It's a good place to be when you're feeling weird. So.

20:46 AH: Art as a form of activism.

20:50 PV: Absolutely. And around here, it's awesome. There's so many talented humans. Just across the street. They're everywhere, everybody here is so talented. So talented. So, I just feel lucky to be a part of this community, really, yeah.

21:12 AH: Yeah, talk more about this community and your connection here.

21:15 PV: Yeah. So, really, the it's been pretty recent that I've been kind of getting into the artistic community here. I have always grown up really scared to be on stage and I have really bad stage fright and I do not like to be in front of people. And so, I tend to kind of say no to a lot of opportunities. I did at least, for a long time. And then one day, you just wake up and you stop feeling sorry for yourself. You're like, "you know what "I love to do this, I think I'm ok at it. I'm just going to go do it and make friends who like to do the same things." So, it's been cool. My friend Mitchella and I have been getting pretty close lately and she is a wonderful musician and sings gorgeous songs. And, her and I have been really good motivators for each other. I've been like, "Get on stage, go sing." She's been like, "You too." [laughs] So, having friends who do the same thing, who want the same things for you is also really important. Yeah, so, it's been cool. We did a fundraiser for undocumented families in Hurricane Harvey, maybe like a couple weeks ago, a month ago. And Eli baked bread and I got in touch with Lacy at Roundabout. And Lacy's an amazing artist also. It was just like cool to be around people who love art and food and taking care of other people. So, I'm slowly involving myself in the artistic community. But, it's been wonderful so far.

22:53 AH: Can you talk more about the dreams for the bread bakery business?

22:59 PV: [Laughs] Oh, the dreams. Yes. So right now, Eli and his aunt are running Dawahare's on Main Street. It's been in their family for a long time. Beverly, his aunt, is married to Martin Dawahare, who's family ran Dawahare's.

23:18 AH: Dawahare's was?

23:19 PV: Dawahare's was a department store. And they're - they were all over, I believe. Everybody around here knows what Dawahare's is. I didn't. But it's cool, knowing and learning. But, so, Beverly really wanted to do something with the building. It's a gorgeous building, it's been here, it's very historic. And she was like, "Let's do a restaurant. Let's do something cool in this building." So, Eli was on board. And, so as of right now, it's got a retail vibe [laughs] for right now. But the dream is to have a pizza shop, but more like fresh ingredients and everything's hand made. Eli's passion in life is definitely bread. I've seen it grow and it's really cool. And so, he definitely wants to put a bakery in here too. And, more like, traditional bread bakery. Not necessarily like sweets and stuff. I'm sure he'll have sweets at some point. But, you know, it's not something you can get, really, around here, the nice big loaf of bread that was made that morning. So, that's happening. And that will hopefully happen soon [laughs]. There are a lot of codes that we have to jump through. But it's definitely in the works. And I'm trying to get him to make like conchas, traditional pan dulce. I want all of that in there [laughs]. That would be so nice. At least like once a week.

24:48 AH: Talk more about those types of breads.

24:50 PV: Oh man. So, [laughs] I don't know, like I said earlier, there's an obvious difference between me and my family's experiences growing up. I'm from Omaha. And Omaha has a pretty big Latino population. And there was panaderias, which are bakeries in Spanish. And, my dad actually, he's been a business owner my whole life. And he owned a store called El Toro when I was little, which means The Bull [laughs], so weird. But, they also had a bakery in the back. And I remember being five or six and sitting on a stool in the back and watching the bakers bake the bread. It was so cute. But anyways, I would always have a concha in my hand. And a concha is, I

don't know, a hand sized cinnamon roll looking thing, but it's just bread with maybe a little bit of cinnamon and then this sugar coating on top. And it's so good, they come in different colors. To a kid, that's like the best thing in the world. There's also these little cookies with little tiny sprinkles all over them. And I don't even know what they're called. I don't know what half of them or called. But, if I look at them, I'm like, "I like those." [laughs] So, anyways, I grew up just having a concha in my hand all the time. And so, when I figured out that Eli could make them, I was like, "What, you can make me concha anytime I want?" It's amazing. So yeah, I really thought that was cool. Something I grew up eating. They're delicious.

26:26 AH: It's neat to think about your memories of watching a baker as a child and then that's becoming a part -

26:30 PV: And then I'm marrying one.

26:31 AH: Yeah.

26:34 PV: It's so cute. I think that baker had long hair too [laughs].

26:41 AH: You said you moved here two years ago. Can you talk about your journey to get from Omaha to here?

26:52 PV: Yeah, it's kind of a weird story, but I'll make it short and sweet. So, actually, I was living in San Diego at the time. I had moved from Omaha to San Diego because I wanted to so bad I was like, "I'm young, I want to live in California." You know that typical teenage dream. "I need to go away to the ocean, find myself." And I totally did. I moved there and lived there for about a year and a half. And actually, Eli was going to move to come live with me in San Diego. This was back in 2015, like that summer, the end of the summer. And we had dated before. So, there was a couple years that we hadn't been together. And we reconnected on Facebook and we were like, "Let's be together! Come move to the ocean, it's going to be great!" And so, he, about two weeks before he was going to move out to San Diego, he got in a really bad car accident. And, some things happened and there was a lot of trauma involved in that accident. And, I knew that Eli was the person I was going to marry. He just was. He's always been that person. So, what do you do in that situation? So, I sold all my stuff and I moved to Whitesburg, somewhere I told him I would never live. [laughs] He's offered for me to live here before and I said that I just didn't want to. And when he got in his accident, I just wanted to be with him, it didn't matter where we were, it didn't matter where we lived. So, I came here in a very quick move. And, I'm not going to lie and say that it was really easy, it was an easy transition. It was a very hard transition and it took me a really long time to kind of understand how to live here. And understand my place here. But here we are, almost two years later and I feel so welcome and so in love with this small town. And I do feel like I have a place here and a voice here. So, it was a challenge, going from giant San Diego city to super small town in Whitesburg. But man, I wouldn't change it for the world because I feel like I've gained so much perspective getting to feel that contrast of city to rural. I think it was meant to happen, as I wish it didn't happen the way it happened. But it was definitely meant to happen that I was supposed to move here.

29:28 AH: What do you feel like is keeping y'all here?

29:32 PV: Oh, [laughs] that's a good question. I don't know. I think we just are where we're supposed to be. I mean, I think, like I said, everything happened organically, this connection that I made with Carla and the opportunities that have popped up. For both of us. Eli gets to run this cool restaurant and eventually a bakery and something that he's wanted to do his whole life. And I get to do this dance thing and travel around and be with kids. I just think we are where we want to be right now. You never know what life will bring you, life changes constantly and very quickly. But, instead of going against it and fighting it, which is something that I definitely have tried to do in the past, instead of sitting in my bed and just wondering why I am where I am, just going out there and doing the things that you still like to do and sharing the love that you have for things with the people that care about you. Then you kind of find purpose in where you are. Then you find purpose in your life. [laughs] So, I think we're just here because it makes sense right now. [laughs] So yeah. We bought land over in Eolia and so we have plans to build a house over there. And, who knows what we're going to do with that land, there's so many possibilities. No kids for right now [laughs]. So, yeah, we have a tiny little five-year plan, for right now. Like I said, things change all the time, yeah.

31:26 AH: That's true

31:27 PV: True, so true [laughs].

31:44 AH: Have you found a community of people to dance with here or that are interested in learning the kind of dance, and by here, I guess I mean eastern Kentucky?

31:58 PV: Yeah. I've definitely gotten a lot of people that have been like, "Do you teach dance?" For their kids, and that is actually something that I've thought really seriously about. I've kind of talked to a few people about maybe where I could start teaching dance, like in a studio somewhere. There's a room upstairs that I think would be a perfect dance studio. So, I've been definitely entertaining that idea. Especially for the kiddos around here. Because I know that kids like to move, they like to dance and staying active is important and learning about a different culture is important. So I think, let's put it all together and teach some folk dance. As far as people my own age, not really. It's mostly for the kids, which is totally understandable. But again, I haven't really offered it. I think if maybe I offered it, maybe people would be interested, it would be kind of fun. Yeah. [laughs] But yeah, definitely in my plan is to start a little dance studio for some kids.

33:11 AH: Yeah, talk more about dreams of especially of how art and music and dance are woven into how you envision your way of being in places? Knowing anything can change all that.

33:31 PV: I mean, I just, I love kids so much. I've always been somebody that has loved kids. And always been uncertain whether I want to have them myself or not. I've always gone back and forth about, "Do I want to be a mom?" It's just - you never know. But, being around them makes me so happy because kids are not brought up with this idea that somebody that looks different from them or maybe does different things than them are bad people. They don't care. Kids are so, they just love everybody. Or they're like brats. But even the brats are like, "Oh it's fine. You can be who you want to be, I'm going to be who I want to be." It's very non-judgy. I just love them. I love them so much, especially the little ones. But, that type of, I mean, it's so important that we have these conversations with young kids so they can grow up and still be that way for the rest of their lives. I understand that if you live in a place that maybe doesn't have that much diversity or

maybe you just aren't, you just don't know about a different culture, you've never really been around it. That doesn't mean that you can't learn it or you can't - I don't know. But, kids are a lot more receptive to change and a lot more receptive to differences, and embrace differences I think a lot better than adults do sometimes. But, so yeah, I just want to be somebody that is an example of somebody that maybe I would have wanted when I was a kid. I just want to be a voice of "It's ok, you don't have to be like everybody else. You don't have to do what everyone else is doing, you can totally be you and still be perfect, and still be wonderful, and still do good for the world." [sighs] So many emotions behind that. So that's what I see for my future is just to make a difference in kids' lives and make them feel like they have a voice and make them feel like they don't have to have a job they don't want to have. I felt like my whole life I didn't know what I wanted to do my whole life. I felt very stuck, I felt like I had to go to college and do things a very specific way and I always felt like I wasn't good enough if I didn't do that. And here I am at twenty-six years old, just now realizing that I can totally be an artist and be happy and content and not feel like I'm not doing enough. I am doing enough, I'm a human on this earth, I love people, I love what I'm doing, I'm enough, it's totally fine. So, just spreading that awareness is my goal [laughs]. Yeah.

36:26 AH: That's really beautiful.

36:26 PV: Thanks.

36:39 AH: Just thinking. I think you bring a really important presence to dance here. There are traditional Appalachian dances, right? But, you're Appalachian because you live here, this is your home and bringing that diversity to dance I think is really important.

37:11 PV: That's so nice to hear.

37:12 AH: Yeah.

37:12 PV: That's so nice to hear. Thank you.

37:17 AH: Yeah, I just wanted to say that.

37:19 PV: Yeah.

37:21 AH: Yeah, I'm wondering if you have any more reflections that you want to share about this community or being an artist or what it means to be in this place and time?

37:40 PV: Well, I think I've always said, and I know a lot of people have always said that perspective is a very powerful thing. And, the news and people and just, there's so many people that have these stereotypes of certain groups of people. For example, people are, they think that Mexicans are all the same. And that's totally not true. I'm a living example of how I am not, I'm not like my parents, I'm not like my grandparents, we're all, obviously from the same family and we have the same blood, but, they speak Spanish and I don't. Stuff like that, there's just so many differences like that even between families. So, we're not all the same. And neither of those are right or wrong, you just are who you are. It doesn't make you any less Mexican or any more Mexican. I don't know if you've ever seen the movie *Selena*, but, she is a Mexican American singer and she sang in Spanish, but she couldn't speak Spanish. So it's like, I'm Selena [laughs]. I've

always been like, "That's me." But, another example is people that live here, or in the mountains, or in a small town, people think that everybody that lives in the mountains is this one way. "Oh they're all horrible people, they don't - " And that's so not true, I feel like I get to live in a place that shows me all these amazing people that live here and that are doing amazing things for the community and who put so much work into it and who love people unconditionally. It's like, I just wish that people could just see this particular town from my eyes because it's not like that at all. It takes you a while to maybe really get to know it. But, I guess I've just been so thankful to be here during this time because, even at the beginning when I was, "I'm not supposed to be here, this isn't a place for me." It was because I wasn't talking to people. It was because I wasn't searching it. And yes, there's good bad and ugly everywhere. But, I don't know, there's not, this is not just a one type of person place. There's so many beautiful people that live here. So, if I hadn't stuck it out, if I hadn't really immersed myself in this community and really followed my heart and started dancing a little bit more, I would have never known. I would have never have met the people that I have met. So, I just think that more people need to be more open and need to have more conversations and understand that there's way more good than bad right now. And so, if you search for the good, it will be good. Just search for it, cause it's there, you just got to look for it. So, that's really all. [laughs] Yeah.

40:38 AH: Anything else?

40:40 PV: No.

40:45 AH: Thank you for your time.

40:47 PV: Thank you for your time. I appreciate it. I'm glad that I can add something to the dance world. I guess I'll add one more thing. There was, when I was in Omaha and I was considering really doing something with dance here, I was scared. I was so worried that there wouldn't be a place for me. Or that there wouldn't be appreciation. I don't know what I was scared of. Like I said, if you don't look for it, you never know. I was just really uncertain as to how I was going to fit into everything. Like, oh they're not, it's like, nobody wants to learn about that, nobody cares. It's not that big of a deal. But then, when I started doing it, people were just coming up to me out of nowhere, just being like, "Your dance moved me, what you do is gorgeous, you can see on your face that it's something that you're proud of." Just things like that and it just, it's such a good feeling, you just feel, I don't know, motivated and it makes you realize that people do care about your dance. They do care so much. So, that's all.

42:04 AH: It matters.

42:04 PV: It matters. Yeah. But just like, certain artists here who I look up to, they matter to me so much. There are a lot of people doing really good stuff here and they have definitely made a difference in my life, so of course, you can make a difference in somebody else's life, that's totally possible. Yeah.

42:36 AH: Well thank you.

42:36 PV: Thank you, Abby.

42:38 AH: Yeah.

42:39 PV: Thanks for doing this.

42:39 AH: Yeah, my pleasure.

42:42 [End of Interview]