

The LGBTQ Community Oral History Project

Rebeca Ortiz

University of Monterey Bay

2020

Session One

Interviewee: Rebeca Ortiz

Location: Salinas, CA

Interviewer: Daisy Macias

Date: April 12, 2020

Q: What is your full name, and place of birth?

Ortiz: Um so my full name now is Rebeca Ortiz Guerrero, I was born in Watsonville California.

Q: What is your date of birth?

Ortiz: I was born January 7, 1992.

Q: Can you describe to me the place in which you were born?

Ortiz: So I was born in Watsonville it was in the old hospital, it is no longer there I think now it's like um a library. It's some kind of county office now so I was born in the old hospital I lived in Watsonville for about six years and then we moved to Castroville.

Q: Okay, how did you like it there?

Ortiz: I really liked Watsonville, I had a lot of family growing up and I went to school, to high school in Watsonville um and the first two, three years. So I really liked it, I had a lot of friends

there. I think if I were ever to move somewhere with my wife, it would be Watsonville, and she's born and raised in Watsonville. So it's something that we really hold here to our hearts.

Q: Okay, um what was your relationship like with your parents when you were smaller?

Ortiz: So I had a really close relationship with my parents, I have a lot of good memories with them. They did a really good job of raising me I have like I remember playing with them. I remember my dad teaching me how to play football. I remember playing dishes with my mom as a child, I feel like I was really close to both of my parents when I was a child.

Q: Is this football like football American football or soccer Mexican soccer?

Ortiz: Both.

Q: Okay, what do you like best?

Ortiz: I like American football best, yeah yeah I really, I still watch games, you know, I remember watching games with my dad growing up, but I never was into soccer as much as I was into football.

Q: Who's your favorite football team?

Ortiz: Am a Raider fan.

Q: Okay, Raiders, alright, um do you have any siblings?

Ortiz: I have an older sister, um she's six years older than me, so her birthday was just this on the seven so she's 34 right now. Yeah.

Q: How did she spend her birthday ?

Ortiz: So well ha, I know we are in quarantine, but we went over to my parents house and we had food and we just she opened her gifts and then she came over yesterday. We did a paint night together here, yeah.

Q: Quarantine right,

Ortiz: Yeah but I mean, you know, we had to and it's hard and it's hard. Like it's been hard because I am so close to my parents, and we really go at least once on the weekends to visit them. So it's been really hard not seeing them, I've been we've been trying to stay away from them. So this is like the first time we had gone to see them now.

Q: Yeah, it's going crazy and we'll talk about those a little bit later in the interview. And so you do have a sibling, so it's just her yourself you're the youngest one. And can you tell me the

stories or a few memories that you remember the most about your childhood, such as memorable holiday event or family get together that you had when you were smaller?

Ortiz: yeah um, so when we talk about holidays sometimes it;s kind of strange. I grew up not celebrating Halloween and certain holiday and I didn't celebrate Christmas how with a Christmas tree or anything because of my parents religion. But we've always done like a Thanksgiving dinner and so one of my really favorite Thanksgiving I guess memory I have is when all of us cas I have family that lives in Watsonville still and we are closer to my dad's side of the family and they're from Oregon. And there is this one Thanksgiving where everybody got together like four brothers and all their wives and kids and my cousins. We got together in Watsonville at my uncle's house and we all got together and had a really nice Thanksgiving family dinner. And that's one of my favorite memories because I'm really close to my dad's family and just being around everybody all my cousins. It was really special, something that doesn't happen too often because they live in different states.

Q: Is there a reason why you're not so close to your mom's side of the family just how you're close to your dad's?

Ortiz: Um, there's a lot of reasons. I don't really like my mom's family. They can be really difficult and I don't really agree with how they treat her. But I've tried to just stay away from them and they're just not nice. So I just, I don't really there's like a couple tias (aunts) that I have

to, but everybody else I kind of stay away from them. They're really judgemental so I just would rather not deal with them.

Q: Okay, so as you grew up what did you envision for your future, I know that you moved from Watsonville to Castroville, um what was it like moving and you know changing environments, although they're not that far away from each other, what was it like for you?

Ortiz: I feel like it really wasn't a big difference, just like the only thing that changed was I didn't get to see my cousin everyday. One of the boy cousins I grew up with, I didn't get to see him everyday but it happened at such a young age that I hadn't started going to school yet, so it didn't really affect me friend wise. And then I feel like growing up I was in such a bubble with my parents' religion that it wouldn't have really mattered because I would have gone to a Christian School anyways. So I that's the only difference that it kind of separated our family a little bit. Um, and I mean I still love Watsonville, I still go a lot. My wife is from there so we still go a lot, her mom is there so we'll go visit her mom occasionally. And um, I like Castroville because I mean I met a lot of people when I was in high school and I went to North County. And a lot of people I'm still friends with them now so I still go to Castroville quite a lot.

Q: Okay, can you tell me or explain me what, what's your parent's religion?

Ortiz: Okay, so they are Seventh Day Adventist and basically they're Christian, but they follow a lot of like I guess Jewish traditions eat kosher. They actually don't eat a lot of meat, but if they

do eat meat it's like chicken. They won't eat pork, they won't eat certain types of fish. They don't eat shrimp, so they don't eat animals that they considered unclean and they worship on Saturdays. So instead of going to church you know to misa (church) on Sunday they go on Saturday. And they have a lot of rules I guess um, they don't wear jewelry, they don't wear a lot of makeup, it yeah. And so worldwide organization so they're all over the place here locally at least in Salinas there's two churches. There's two in Watsonville there is 3 in Seaside and 1 in Pacific Grove Seventh Day Adventist Churches yeah.

Q: When you grew up, or when you first learned about religion or the religion that your parents followed, um how did that help you or how did that probably didn't help you as much. Did you like it or didn't like it?

Ortiz: I think I liked it because I didn't really have a choice. I wasn't really educated on other religions, I kind of was born and raised into it. So it was just like a family thing that we did every Saturday we would go to church. On there was Bible studies, I would have to participate. I didn't have an option. I guess in a way I did like it because at the time when I was in it, it felt like the church was your family and it felt like I had all of these friends and all of these church families and we did activities together. And so I felt like I had a big extended family. As I got older and I realized that I was gay it really affected me because I was in the closet and I had all this guilt in me that I wasn't being why was being. And I think when I was 19 I had my first serious relationship with a woman. And it really affected me mentally and emotionally because I had to lie constantly to my parents and to these people I considered my family and that was really hard.

Q: Okay, so we went over how you move from Watsonville to Castroville and um you talked a little bit about North county, the high school um. So was this an opportunity to meet new people in general?

Ortiz: It was I went to private school my whole life, and it was private school through my parents religion. So from Kindergarten through anything a sophomore in high school I went, I never had an option in it. And it was just like okay, this is what you're going to do and this is what you have to do. When I was a sophomore, I got kicked out of the private school I was in Watsonville and I got kicked out because they caught me smoking pot and drinking. So they have a no tolerance and you have to get kicked out I think for a year and then you can reapply and go. And so I had to they moved me to North County so I was a sophomore. I had never gone to public school. I was really scared. I had heard all these stories and my parents had me so sheltered that I didn't know what public school is going to be like. And it was really different, like just even the schedules and like how you had to get stuff done it was so different. But, I after my initial like being scared of going to public school. I really liked it and I met people that I'm still friends with to this day, so yeah.

Q: How did your parents react to you getting kicked out?

Ortiz: Not great, um they were really mad and really disappointed, but I think my mom at least she saw kind of this coming. Because I had already started acting now I was already you know, I



had this rebellious attitude because I wasn't happy. And I was going through some other stuff so it really was just manifesting it like drug use. Um, and so I don't think she was surprised she was really disappointed. My dad was very angry, he kind of I don't think he ever really noticed a lot of the struggles as much as my mom did. Um, so he was really angry and it really shifted our relationship to I guess you had never he never thought that I would do something like this. So I really affected him, yeah.

Q: So I guess your mom saw it coming as you were kind of building towards um, I guess rebellious you know person that they probably never seen before um, and kind of North County was that door for you to kind of open up a little bit more.

Ortiz: Yeah and experienced things I have been so sheltered my whole life, like I I feel like I was this person that my parents wanted me to be because I didn't have another representation of what I could be. And North Monterey County like they had an LGBT club, they had like gay teachers I had never experienced that ever so it was a really big opening for me. To kind of see what was out there and what was in the world, and like hey, like there's lesbians there is gay kids, like all these things I was like not ever exposed to.

Q: Were you part of anything like the LGBTQ club or?

Ortiz: No I was still really closeted in high school so I didn't participate in anything. I think the only one I did was Aguilas Guerreras, and that was that was the only club I was part of, yeah.

Q: I did that one too, it was cool. Um, did you get to finish high school um, how was that journey in high school in comparison with what you had experienced back at your other schools?

Ortiz: So I transferred in sophomore year about the last semester so I wasn't there that long. And then a lot of the classes that they placed me in, I had already learned everything. I was super bored, sophomore and junior I was really really bored. And then I took AP classes, but you know senior year is kind of the easiest year so it really was like whatever. I graduated high school in 2010 as I was set to graduate, I did it didn't affect me getting kicked out of school anything cas high school North County took me in right away, yeah.

Q: Okay um, what is your highest education, and if you decided to stop your education what were the reasons?

Ortiz: So when I graduated from high school I went to Cabrillo for about two three years. And I did all of my general ed I was doing my specialized classes. And all this time I was doing school, my mom was sick so on top of doing school and working a part time job, I would take her to all my appointments. And at one point I was taking a math class and I just couldn't pass it. I think it was all the stress and I just got really impatient and it was hard to make and meet with a part time job. So I just start working two full time jobs and I couldn't keep going to school, yeah.

Q: You decided to just stop completely or did you ever think oh maybe after the stress goes down a little bit, um am gonna be able to come back to school?

Ortiz: I did, I have considered it, but I feel like I'm in a job where I'm happy right now you know, working for the county. I like where I'm at, I like the people I work with so yea. But my family's always encouraging me to go to school. But it's hard for me because I personally have a really hard time sitting in classes. I really enjoyed the classes that I did take that were for my major but like the general ed classes that I'm never ever going to use. It was hard for me to really focus in them.

Q: What is your major or what was your major?

Ortiz: It was human services so essentially I wanted to be a social worker, and I wanted to work in the children services part of it. But I, as I started going deeper into it I realized that for me because I'm a very emotional person and I stress a lot. It just was not going to be good for my mental health, so I'm working at a different place now.

Q: Right, and what is your current job at the moment, so you work for the county but what do you do?

Ortiz: So I work in the administrative branches department and my unit is called benefit issuance and recovery, and basically I work with issuing benefits for customers. And if they owe any debt to the county, I am the department that does the billing and does the payments and all that stuff.

Q: So your the bad girl (Laughs)

Ortiz: Unfortunately yes (laughs) a lot of people see it like that.

Q: (Laughs) okay, alright so um, can you tell me about that time when you found out that you were interested more towards one gender than probably the gender that you are because you're a girl supposed to be interested on?

Ortiz: Yeah, um, I don't think it was anything that I ever consciously was aware of it. The first time I realized that there was gay people I guess was when in [unclear] and some girl tried to kiss me and I was probably 11 and so I I again I had no never been exposed to anything LGBT so to me I was like what the hell. Like and then when I got into high school I I private school is interesting um, and I realized that I didn't want to have a boyfriend that I wanted to have a girlfriend. So but because I was so closeted I had a girlfriend and a boyfriend so I never really thought about it. It wasn't like I never had an aha! moment of where I was like oh my God I'm gay. I just knew that I liked girls.

Um, so all through high school, I just I dated girls but I was super in the closet I think the senior like the last relationship I had with a guy was a senior. And I really was like okay this is it like I need to be serious [unclear] I need to really, you know and I dated him all my senior year. And he broke up with me right before prom, so I was kind of like happy about it to be honest. And then after high school I was like okay, well you know now I can kind of actually be in a serious relationship and I got into my serious relationship with a girl which lasted about two, three years yeah.

Q: Were you ever confused? That you're probably maybe I don't like girl, maybe I do like guys or how was that transition moment?

Ortiz: I was never confused about it, but I think because of how I was raised I had such a hard time accepting myself. And I knew from the time I was in high school up until I came out of the closet to my parents when I was 21. I knew that it was gonna change my relationship drastically with my family, and I knew that there was a very strong possibility that they would never speak to me again and kick me out. And like just be done with me, so I think that's why I stayed in the closet for so long because I was really scared of losing my parents. I'm losing my family.

Q: Okay, that leads me to my other question, can you walk me through that very first time in which you told your parents about your sexual orientation? How was it like?

Ortiz: (Sighs) so it was horrible, I had my parents were really conservative um, when I came out it wasn't by choice. I actually was dating Mayra and she, her parents had kicked her out because she was doing things she was not supposed to. So because I was dating her because I cared for her at the time, I convinced my parents somehow to let her stay at our house. And so she stayed there, and then my parents realized like, wait like this is not a normal friendship.

And so my mom calls me one time away we went to go get breakfast really upset and said like hey I found some pictures and I think it was like pictures of us kissing. And so I had to come home and they basically confronted me. They told her she had to leave and my parents just confronted me and like told me like you know there's no hiding it. We know now, like do you think this is okay, they pretty much gave me the whole like speech about that I was going to go to hell and it was bad. Like my dad is very he doesn't talk a lot, he's very silent he is very serious and he cried. He said some hurtful things I had never [unclear], and my dad doesn't curse. This was the closest to like bad language, I hadn't heard him say that he called me like a marimacha.

00:24:45 You know that's super like offensive but I know that they were just really hurt, and I know that they struggle with this to this day. And I always tell my wife this because we talk about it, I always tell her that I can't get upset at them. Because they're not hypocrites they live their religion the way it's supposed to. They're not hypocrites about it , they're humble they follow what they believe in. So I can't really get upset at them for it because they're not being hypocrites about it. This is truly what they believe so I can just respect it and learn to not let it affect me.

Q: Right

Ortiz: Yeah, but it was really hard coming out like it was horrible, it really like was bad.

Q: Did you see that coming when you decided to take Mayra in, and we'll talk a little bit more later about Mayra and who she is. Um, did you were you scared of bringing her home because of your family or did you think maybe if I bring her and she's just a girl like me and we can be friends, and they won't know about it.

00:25:51 Ortiz: I don't, my mindset was just I don't think it was there. I I was scared of it, but I also I guess I felt for her because I knew that she had nowhere to go. So I was scared of my parents coming out about part of me. I guess was kind of like if they don't know by now I don't know what like without me saying, directly they're not going to know. Cas it was really obvious, I hadn't dated anybody since high school, I never talked about guys but I don't know my parents just never wanted to see it.

Q: Did you ever bring in any like girlfriends to the house just regular friends home that your parents were aware of or?

Ortiz: Yeah, so I had regular friends and my mom had consistently questioned me since high school about if I was a lesbian. But I always told her like I don't want to talk about this with you

right now. You know, I just always brushed it off as a joke because I don't I was not ready to tell her I was. And so from the age of 19 to 21 to 20 21, I was in a serious relationship with someone. And she would come to the house, but my parents never I think my mom knew but they never questioned me about it. They just assumed she was my friend.

Q: They must have assumed or maybe she already kind of had an idea but wasn't maybe ready to talk about it, because if she always um, constantly asked you and questioned you, you never gave her an exact answer. For example no, then that gave a little bit of room for doubt, so I feel like she already had it coming but she..

Ortiz: Yeah, she kind of knew but I never just wanted to talk about it with my mom.

00:27:25 Q: Okay, so um, now so your dad was really upset your mom was really upset too but more on your dad side. So after coming out did that change your relationship with your sister, because I mean we talked about your parents. But how did that affect or how does she support you?

Ortiz: Um, she didn't she knew I was queer since I think I was 19 and came out to her. So she knew she was not caught off guard, that it would change the family dynamic so she never pushed me to come out to my parents she never we never talked about it. So she was aware , she spent time with my partner my first serious relationship she knew her she knew her family. All this stuff but she never pushed me to tell my parents she knew what would happen. And so when I



was forced out of the closet to my parents, she kind of she didn't have my back, she didn't support me. She also really did not like Mayra, so I think that was a big factor in it. Um, and when she kind of just told my parents she didn't know. So that really impacted our relationship because we kind of stopped talking, a because of Mayra and then because I felt really hurt that she didn't support me.

00:28:52 Q: Did she not support you because she didn't want to get on your parents bad side? When you told her that you were gay, did she ever try to convince you maybe no your not, maybe you are just confused? What were those talks that she had with you that probably um, you know kind of try to make you go the wrong way where you wanted to go.

Ortiz: Yeah, I mean when I initially came out she was okay with it and she was supportive of it. But she also you know let was like you know you can't tell my parents because you already know how they are. You know, so she just she was initially supportive, she liked who I was with at the time. So she had been supportive um, but when I came out she just really I think she was not supportive. Just because it was hard for her to see the family you know, kind of being torn apart and it was hard for her because she really didn't like Mayra so.

Q: And so your mom and your dad and your sister they are you know they are the only people you live with right at that moment and Mayra that you just had there with you. Um, did you have any friends at that time that you came out or family members that helped you through the process?

00:30:10 Ortiz: Um, I was pretty much out of the closet to everybody, even kids that I went to high school, I mean church with like they knew that I was in a serious relationship. With my ex not Mayra they knew about her you know we spent time together. So I was pretty much out of the closet to everybody except for the church and for my parents like the older people in church.

Q: So they knew.

Ortiz: Yeah, so like my my friends have known since forever, they you know they couldn't they could care less they were as long as I was happy they were you know they couldn't care.

Q: Now out of like was there probably someone who didn't know that you were gay. And then after they found out maybe a close friend or someone else um, that didn't know you at the moment did that impacted your relationship with them?

00:31:02 Ortiz: Um, I think besides my parents when people from church that were older , they were like my parents age found out I was gay, it really changed my relationship with them. Like I said I had felt like I was in that family dynamic growing up. They knew me since I was a kid since I was a baby really. And they watched me grow up and I felt I had I had a very close relationship with everybody from church. And then when the parents started finding out that I was gay, like they just ignored me and it was like so the I got kicked out of church. Also, and if they if they see me still because I know a lot of people they will pretend not to know me.

And they went as far as when I was getting ready to get married, they went as far as telling people who like like my best friend I've known her since I was a kid. Her name is Lina, our parents met each other through church and they went as far as telling and I consider her parents like second parents like I am very close. I still go over to their house all the time, I lived with them for a while. After me and Mayra broke up because I wasn't ready to go to my parents house, so I consider them family. And the other people from church went as far as telling them not to go to my marriage, my wedding I mean. And to not you know that they shouldn't have me over at the house that it was not okay all this stuff. I mean, they didn't listen to them, they I still am very close to them to this day. But it really affected the relationship I had with other people because it was really hurtful. Like you've known me my whole life and you're telling other people not to spend time with me and you just like telling my family not to spend time with me . Like it was a lot, it was really hard.

Q: So when your parents found out that you were gay, did they kick you out of your house?

Ortiz: Not immediately, I still stayed. It was really uncomfortable it was really hard. I was really depressed for a long time, um and like the day after Thanksgiving my mom kicked me out and so I got my stuff and I left.

Q: And where did you go?

00:32:56 Ortiz: I went with Mayra yeah, I didn't really have anywhere to go. And because of the relationship I was in, I was very controlled and I had nowhere else to go so I just went with her.

Q: Where did she lived at the time when you left your house?

Ortiz: She was renting a room in Salinas

Q: Okay, so you lived with her, okay and we'll talk with her a little bit more further and describe who she is and everything. So, we talked a little bit about your family and your close friends and your church friends and the people around you. So um, I mean I could imagine that after coming out, your life must of changed and you know it changed drastically. How did it change from being in the closet to coming out in general?

Ortiz: Um, I think the first year and a half it was really hard because of the situation I was in. I was in the relationship I was in, so it was really hard and I was really isolated. Then I felt isolated from my family and from my sister who I am very close to and was very close to. And she chose to stop speaking to me because of the relationship I was in. So I didn't talk to her for like a year, and that was really hard. And I felt like okay, I'm out of the closet you know, I'm able to be who I am but on the other end of it I was in a really abusive situation. So I was still putting up a front about what type of like relationship I was and that was hard because I had to put on a smile when things were not great. And that was really emotionally draining.

Q: So um, can you tell me going back a little bit um, to your first relationship like your first serious relationship. Um, who were they and how did that first experience work out for you?

Ortiz: So her name was Ivonne um Aguillon I don't know if you know her she went to North County too yeah (laughs)

Q: I have an idea who she is

00:34:59 Ortiz: Yeah, so I dated her from when I was 19 to about 21 and it was a good relationship. Um, but um a lot of things went wrong in it, just because she was talking to other people towards the end. And I became aware of it and so I decided I needed to get out of that situation and I did. And she started talking about marriage and things, and I just couldn't. I could not envision that with her, especially after everything that I had found out. So I just you know we broke up and then I got in a relationship with Mayra. She, I was really close to like it was a good first serious relationship. I was close she came to my house, I went to her house I was close to her family. Like you know it was, she was a good partner up until she wasn't you know.

Q: Did you know her prior to like dating her for a long time, or did you just happen to meet her?

Ortiz: We met in high school, we had classes together, and so I knew who she was. She knew who I was. We were friends at first, yeah.

Q: And then that, okay. Um, so I know we talked a little but about Mayra, and just for the record um I know Mayra because she was um, or she is the aunt of an ex boyfriend that I had. Um, I just wanted to make sure because you know just for the record.

Ortiz: yeah

Q: (Laughs) you're kind of like how does she know so much about Mayra so that's the way I know you. Because at a party um we happen to be there at the same time. Um, So I know a lot about Mayra because um I was with this person for you know quite a long time. So I have an idea of who she is and what she did um not exactly in her relationships, but just an overall. So and am gonna ask so I am aware that you were in a relationship with Mayra Ochoa. Um, can you tell me about your relationship with Mayra and how did that relationship shape you to who you are?

00:37:03 Ortiz: Yeah, so I dated her after Ivonne, there was drama there because Ivonne was still trying to I guess get back with me. And I wasn't having it but I don't know so they had their own little thing. They had a fight about it which was like really dumb, and then I saw a bunch of red flags, but I still got into a relationship with her. And I was with her for about a year and a half, and I in the middle of the relationship I had essentially was forced out of the closet. And then I went to live with her for about a year, maybe a little bit under a year.

And it started off good and then it just as it progressed it got worse and worse. And I think a lot of it had to do with her alcohol use, like she wasn't an alcoholic and she couldn't control herself and she was really violent she would really lash out to everybody. And unfortunately because I lived with her, I was mostly you know the target of most of her aggression so behind closed doors she was really really violent. And she would emotionally, physically abuse me.

Q: What were those red flags that you mentioned, um what did you see before you started dating her?

Ortiz: I she was talking to other people you know but we're not in a relationship. So I saw her talking to other people, and one of the girls reached out to me and wanted to fight me. And I just kind of ignored it you know, it was kind of it was really strange and I saw her alcohol use. I saw her starting fights with Ivonne and I didn't understand it. But I still you know she was still being really nice to me, but it kind of was just like oh she's being protective of me you know.

00:38:52 Q: So you kind of saw that protective side of her towards you, but you thought that it was never gonna turn to you. Okay, so later on when you lived with her um did you just think about like the way she was treating you um, as it's just the way she loves me? How did you handle that?

Ortiz: Um, I don't think it was that I thought it was the way she loved me, I think a lot of it was that she did such a great job at isolating me. But I felt like I had nobody, I didn't have my family

because I had to come out of the closet to them. So I couldn't ask them for help and I was embarrassed to ask my friends for help you know. Here I am, I've gone to college I am educated I should know better than to be in a domestic violence relationship. So a lot of it was really embarrassing to, I didn't know how to ask for help. I felt like I couldn't I feel like I felt like I should have seen those red flags and like not have gotten in this relationship with her. So it was really hard, I didn't know what to do, I didn't know who to call, I just stayed stuck in that relationship until I just couldn't take it anymore. And I got myself out of the relationship.

Q: What were you doing at the time when you were with her? Were you going to school? Were you working?

Ortiz: Yeah, so I was going to school and I was working, and so she would drive me to school and wait for me in the car. And then take me to work and wait for me in the car and then pick me up.

Q: And what was she doing at that time?

Ortiz: She was not working so then it really got hard to go to school. So that was one of the reasons I also stopped going because she would be in the car, you know waiting for me and like telling me to hurry up. But it's class I can't hurry up, so that also was one of the reasons I stopped going.



00:40:38 Q: Was there a reason why she waited for you? Or did she just wait for you because she didn't want to come back home?

Ortiz: She was just trying to control me I think, and trying to control a situation. And she had so many issues that she thought she couldn't trust me.

Q: So it was more like the jealousy and controlling kind of part okay. So after you know, her kind of being with you you know, just outside of work, outside of school everywhere you went. Um, what were the circumstances that took place that made you realize, you know what this is not a healthy relationship I need to get out.

Ortiz: I think the whole time I was with her, I knew as soon as she put her hands on me. I knew it was not going to be a healthy relationship, and I knew that she wasn't going to change because she had substance abuse problems. And so I knew it was not a healthy relationship, I think what was the straw that broke the camel's back was on top of everything she was doing to me, she also cheated on me. And she brought someone back to where we're staying at and then I found out about it. And so it was like okay, you've done all this to me, I've allowed you to put hands on me, I've allowed all this abuse. And then you're still going to cheat on me like I've worked, I'm the main provider and you're still going to do this. And that's when I was like okay, like enough is enough, you need to get out of this.

And so basically when I confronted her she knew one of her friends who like was kind of in my ear telling me that I needed to leave her because she was never going to change. She was always going to be like this, she had a pattern with her past relationships. So when I confronted her and she started getting violent, I called her friend and told her come get her because I'm packing up my stuff and leaving come get her because she's getting you know really aggressive. And if you don't come get her I'm going to call the police.

And so her friend came and picked her up and they left and I got all my stuff, I packed all my stuff. I called my friend, I still remember this, we still talk about it, I called my friend from Castro one of my best friends. And she was not aware of it, she told me later on that she had seen certain things that made her question it, but she was not aware of it. What she saw in the front was a really good relationship. So when I called her I was like, sobbing and I was like, you need to come help me please come help me like I need your help.

And so she was, she told me she was having dinner at a restaurant with her family. So she heard like the desperation in my voice, so she dropped everything she came and I told her I'm packing up like can you please help me pack and like I'm leaving. And then I called my other best friend who I grew up with, and cas I wasn't ready to talk to my family. Um, and then I called her and told her, like this is what's going on can I please stay with you. And she said yeah, like get your stuff come over here you can live with me. And so that whole night I had two other friends helped me pack and we packed out and we left. And Ivonne actually helped me pack and leave

as well. So with all my stuff and we left and I blocked Mayra, I basically that was it. That was the moment where I was like enough is enough, I can't take this anymore.

00:43:38 Q: When was this, do you remember the year?

Ortiz: Um, I want to say maybe 2000 and maybe 2014 or 13 around that time, yeah.

Q: Okay, so it's been a while.

Ortiz: Yeah.

Q: When you were getting out and when you started packing, did you just started packing because you were um, was there a fight that just made you realize I need to get out or did you just were you thinking about this maybe a day or two before, maybe I need to get out?

Ortiz: I always wanted to leave the relationship, I always wanted to be able to ask for help. But I just part of me wasn't brave enough to be vulnerable and tell anybody that this is what's going on. So I always wanted to leave, and then when I found out that she was cheating on me immediately I was like okay that's it. I'm done yeah, and then the way her family reacted was just like really like they placed a lot of the blame on me. But they knew like they saw what how she treated me and what she did. And they really you know blames me, and that was really hard because I felt like I had gotten close to her family. And they were more concerned with her

getting in trouble with the law then what she was doing to me. So I just like was like, I'm done and I'm over it.

00:44:53 Q: So when you were in a relationship with her um, how did you get close to her family? Did you guys would go visit like her family because I know she lived um, or used to live I don't know about her anymore. But um, with her grandparents and I know that her grandparents are extremely strict and they're very, you know conservatice and stuff.

Ortiz: But those are her parents.

Q: Are they? Oh sorry her parents.

Ortiz: Like we would go so it was really hard because her mom was kind of more accepting of it. But her dad was very like, like we would always be like, oh like I'm her friend. But essentially, I think that her parents sae that I was a good girl that I worked that I went to school. And so her parents welcomes me in and like her dad was used to me being at the house. The mom was used to me like I would be there with the mom a lot and so I got really close to her mom.

Q: So um, when you were leaving did you have an idea where you were going? Or you just decided to call your friends and be like, this is what's going on and they allowed you to stay with them?

00:46:10 Ortiz: Um yeah, basically I called my best friend and I told her like what was going on. And she said, come and stay with me, she's like family to me she was like yeah, like don't even hesitate come get your stuff and come stay with me.

Q: Okay, so you were yeah, because I'm imagining you being desperate trying to get out, but probably you didn't have an idea where to go.

Ortiz: yeah

Q: You're trying to get out of a situation and the people around you don't know about it. Don't know what you're going through so you're probably like how am I supposed to open up and let you know let them know this is what's going on.

Ortiz: Yeah

Q: Okay um, so do you believe that if you had not taken the decision to move on, you would be the person that you are today? How does that relationship changed you?

Ortiz: I think it changed me to be able to give more boundaries. Like I feel like I didn't have any boundaries with her. So it was really hard, I really with my wife she was thankfully really patient with me. Because I carried a lot of baggage and a lot of scars and I came really damaged, I didn't trust her, I had all these issues. And so I'm really just my wife was so patient and she was so

loving and that's the one thing I can say. Like she makes me feel ahh, like how I always call her a big teddy bear because she's very tall, she's this huge person.

But I have never ever felt unsafe with her, she never you know, she just really made a point to make sure that I knew that I was safe. And it took a while like I didn't trust her at first, I was always kind of waiting for the other shoe to drop. I was waiting for her to do something to me, I think but she was so patient and so loving that we were able to work through those issues. I completely trust her now 100% and like we have a really good marriage because of it.

00:48:04 Q: So you were very I guess traumatized I would say, that the same thing was going to happen again, it was going to repeat again.

Ortiz: Yeah, and unfortunately no LGBT relationships they do have a high percentage of DV relationships. It's kind of not normal but it's something that happens a lot of, there's a lot of couples that I have know that have experienced it. And there's a lot of people that I know that have experienced it unfortunately I don't know if it's because you're with someone of the same sex you think it's okay to put hands on somebody. So you know, it's just something that I would say that at least half of the people that are LGBT have experienced a domestic violence type of relationship.

Q: Would you say that people are aware of the LGBTQ people being in like domestic violence or would you say till this date is not very known because I have family members who are um, you know gay, bisexual and they have experienced something similar, but um I am not very familiar.

Ortiz: I think we just don't talk about it, we because I definitely think I've seen it in the hearings here in Salinas, the LGBT community . Like couples are known to have put hands on each other, and it's just something that people don't talk about. It's just you know that this couple you know does this and you don't interfere. You don't say anything. Like I know that when I was in a relationship with Mayra, that there was several like of her friends that knew that she was putting her hands on me. And they were aware of the situation and they just never got involved, except for her friend who kept telling me like you need to leave or you need to leave her. But they never sit up for me, they never said anything, it was just like a known thing that was never addressed.

00:49:55 Q: Um, now can you tell me about that place and time that you meet your current partner? So I know that you guys, you said something about Watsonville. But how was it like, how did you remember that specific moment?

Ortiz: So after me and Mayra ended things I really was I didn't want to be in a relationship. I didn't want to be with anybody, I felt like I needed time to heal myself. And to work on my issues that led me get into that type of situation. So I really I refuse to you know, I would go out and have fun. But I never got into a relationship, and then like about a year and a half after me

and Mayra had broken up. I had stopped talking to this girl because she was not the type of person that you would have to be in a serious relationship with.

And so I stopped talking to her because I realized I was in a place where I was ready to have a serious relationship. And I was ready to commit to somebody, and you know do all those things. I wanted to be with someone, I wanted companionship and I felt like I was in a good place to do that. So um, I have known who she was because I worked for the Girls Scouts for a long time. And there's a center here in Salinas, like I have seen her around at a couple like events that are LGBT I had seen who she was I knew who she was (unclear) her ex partner was at the time because her ex partner had a daughter. Would go to the Girl Scouts and so my wife would take her because they were co parenting. And so my wife would take her to her daughter to the Girl Scouts and like I would see her here and there. I knew who she was, so I kind of I added her on Instagram. And she sent me a message asking like if we knew each other, and I said ohh um, I think we have mutual friends in common. And we did, we knew some of the same people. And then we started talking and um, I the day she had messaged me I think I was getting a tattoo. And so like we were talking and stuff and then the next day I was getting my nails done here in Salinas. And she was like oh, like let's hang out you know. We had talked the night before like all night until my phone died.

And so I don't know I always tell her, like it was kind of an instant connection thing. And I have never felt such a quick connection with somebody like I could talk to her about anything. The first three days we spent together we talked until three in the morning. Just talking about



everything in life and what we had experienced. And I didn't want to leave like I just wanted to spend time with her just being around her. And like we went to go it was around my sister's birthday so I was getting my nails done. We went to go I went to go my sister's gift in Marina or something. And we went to eat like we just started hanging out and for three days like we stayed up until one just talking. Like and then I would go home or whatever and then we went out like on the fourth day.

And Tony laughs about this but we went out and we went out to the club and we hooked up. And then we on the drive home it was really really awkward, I didn't know you know is really is just a really weird situation. And a week later she asked me to be her girlfriend and I said yeah, and so I always tell her that we're like the stereotypical lesbians. We got together so quickly, we got married so quickly, we, I moved in within like three months of knowing each other. Like I just moved on with her and like and then a year later she proposed to me. We've only been together for four years, but we one of those years we have been married. It was just kind of an instant thing like, I just knew that she was it for me, yeah.

00:53:36 Q: So before, so after you moved out of mayras and went to your friends, um, how long did you live with your friend? Did you ever move back with your parents, did your parents ever found out that you had moved?

Ortiz: Yeah, so when I broke up with Mayra, I worked hard to build that relationship with my family up again. You know, and it took a while like it took a while for me and my sister to get to

a good place. And for me and my parents to get to a good place, and I address the situation. Like yeah, she was not a good person to me but I'm still gay doesn't change who I am you know. And so then after I think I lived with my friend for a year, and then I lived with my parents for another year. So I moved back in when we were at a good point in our lives and moved in with them and I was working. I would be there and like I didn't hide who I was anymore, but I wasn't in their face about it. Like um, they I mean they knew I was gay they saw me (unclear) to any guys. So they knew about it, I think my mom is more accepting of it and she loves my wife to death. So they have a really good relationship, and I think that's helped her transition a little bit more because she really likes my wife. Um, and my sister also loves my wife so that really helped get us to a good place.

Q: So um, how is how would you describe your current partner in comparison with any other partner that you had before? How is she different from all of them?

Ortiz: I think just as a person, she's really genuine she's really loving. She just saw me I guess is the best way to see it, she saw me when I felt like nobody saw me. And she saw me for who I was and who has the biggest heart of any person I've ever met. And I start getting emotional but I really have never felt as loved by anybody as in by her (crying). She like I said me being like to feel safe is a really big thing and she makes me feel safe.

And she takes care of me and I, we have a really good relationship like whatever I feel like I'm lacking, she definitely has those strengths. And she to me like I just see her and she's the kindest

person like she'll give you the shirt off her back. And in spite of going through these hard things in her life, she lost her mom when she was 21. She still has such a kind heart and that's one of the reasons I'm so in love with her. I've seen how she parents a child and she's such a good mom. And so all these qualities in her, are what made me fall in love with her, yeah.

00:56:24 Q: So you saw, sort of of like that genuine side that you never seen in people.

Ortiz: Honest, she's still honest with who she is and what she believes in, and she never pretends to be something she's not so, yeah.

Q: So um, would you say that you getting out of like an abusive relationship and her being so loving. That was what you needed because you know, and then she saw you she like when you was you were probably in that state like you know depress and her stuff like that. Um but you were ready to move on right away, I mean not right away. But you found someone who was completely opposite from what you had experienced so I feel like that sort of attracted you to her.

Ortiz: I think it was like a mixture of things, I think by the time I met her I was in a really good place with myself and like I realized that I was worthy of love. And all these things that you never really think about. I had gotten to a really good place with myself and knowing that I was capable and strong enough to put boundaries with my next relationship. Like hey, this is what I like, this is what I don't like. And if you ever do this to me I will walk away, and I you know I

was in a good place. So when we met, I fell like we like I said we met at the right time. She was in a good place now it's in a good place, it took a while for us to be able to have a good healthy relationship. Because we both had a lot of baggage, but her being so kind and loving was one of the big things for me. Like I always she has so much love to give to everybody and she's so good with everybody that she's with, that, that was one of those big things that I was like okay yeah like she's a really good person.

Q: Right, um did you, you mentioned to me did she propose to you or you propose to her?

Ortiz: So she proposed to me and then I proposed to her on New year's. So we both kind of did the proposal thing and I knew she was going to propose to me because she made me pick my ring out because she always says I'm so picky with jewelry and stuff. So like I picked the ring I think in November and then she was like well I am not going to propose to you right away. Just so that I have an idea of what type of ring you want, and then she proposed to me. I want to say January? Yeah she proposed to me in January.

Q: So she proposed to you first and you proposed to her after. So describe to me the place and how did you propose to your wife?

00:58:50 Ortiz: So the way that I proposed to her was um, my sister actually helped, had a scavenger hunt for her. And so my sister helped um I had these little like note cards and I would write where they needed to go. So like she went to go like it was like different places that we had

met. So first place that we met was where I go to my eyebrows and I was doing my nails at the time. Those are the first time we had ever met person face to face, so she my sister that was it. (unclear) and I had to guess where they went, and I already told my sister the places. And so they went to the nail place and she went and got her eyebrows done, we still go to that same place and get our eyebrows done to this day.

And so she went and got her eyebrows done, and then the second place we went to, they went to was like I think our first date was like going to the movies. So we went to the movies the three of us we watched the movies. And then we went to eat which was we went to the first place we had ever gone to eat, which was sushi in Monterey. And then I took her to the beach because that's one of her favorite places and I proposed to her there. I had like a little um, thing I had painted for her and I had roses and stuff yeah. Once I proposed to her.

Q: And so were there any other friends involved or it was just your sister?

Ortiz: It was just my sister yeah,

Q: it was just the three of you

Ortiz: Yeah

Q: Okay cool, um around what time was this you said you guys have been together for about four years.

Ortiz: Um, it was the...

Q: like 2818 you would say late 2018.

Ortiz: We got together in 2016 so it was in 2017 that I proposed because she proposed to me in January 1, 2017 and then I did it like at the end of the month I think or like in February or something.

01:00:34 Q: Now can you describe to me the day of your wedding? Who was part of it and what did it mean to you personally.

Ortiz: So we got married September 01, 2008, it was a holiday weekend and my sister was my maid of honor. And I had family my uncle, my two uncles from Oregon came um, we had invited my parents but they didn't come. They still have a hard time understanding why we left the need to get married. And when I told my mom I was going to get married, she cried about it. So and that's really something that I'm really on another note, she's been really great with my family. And he knows not to push the issue with them like she's very respectful of it just really respectful of them.

And so she doesn't ever push you know, she's not we're not overly affectionate in front of them. Were very respectful that um, but my mom cried when I told her, and my dad was really like he was very silent you know. But they did help us bring the chairs to where we're doing it, so that was to me that was a big step. Um, and just being able to spend time with my parents and my wife is it a really big step for me. Um, so it was just family and some of our friends, yeah. And then her niece or nieces and nephews came which was really nice, yeah.

Q: Where was the wedding at?

Ortiz: It was in Marina, there is this little um chapel there and they have like an outdoor area. So we got married outside and then it looks like inside it looks like a little church but it's actually a hall. Um, and that's where we got married.

01:02:17 Q: How would you describe your wedding in comparison with you would say a male and a female wedding? Is there a like a difference in the way like you celebrate? For example, the party after or would you say I mean it's literally about the same. I know well I am Mexican and I know we have like here little things where we do and they do it at every wedding. You know they do like the fajo thing they you know they dress the guys as um yeah they put a mandil on the guys and stuff like that.

Ortiz: Yeah yeah (Laughs)

Q: How was your wedding?

Ortiz: We have a pretty I would say Americanized traditional wedding, like we had a wedding ceremony. My sister was the wedding officiant so she married us and we had our vows. And then we all walked in, we had a mariachi at our wedding, so that was the mexican side of it which was really nice. We did our first dance, but we didn't do I think our first dance was to Beyonce actually. (Laughs)

So, but we didn't do any anything like that, we just to us, it was like a simple wedding gathering. We had our first dance, we did a wedding game which was like just um, I think we had chairs and we're back to back and we had to answer questions about each other. And then we just had the mariachi, there was a dance floor you know there was alcohol, food desert table. So it was just really low key, we didn't do anything too crazy. Um, because we were paying for everything we kind of really have to budget and work hard for it. We did something just small and simple and to be with the people that we cared about and loved, yeah.

Q: So it was more like I would say sentimental you know to get married rather than because I know a lot of us are I would I mean I'm not married. But when I envision a wedding or my wedding I envision something like ohhh banda. And like what are you gonna do to surprise your like you know guests and stuff like that for you guys it was more like you know who is there for you and what it means to them.



Ortiz: Yeah yeah, that's how it was we it was really small um, we've had the mariachi which was really beautiful. And once it was really nice, our family friend paid for that so that was awesome. Um, and yeah we had a DJ after and it was just like with friends like just having fun and with my uncle's. It was nice you know, yeah.

01:04:47 Q: Um, how has your life changed ever since you got married?

Ortiz: Um, It hasn't really because we live together before we were married, so I mean we still live together. We're still in the same place we live, it's changed because now I have a new last name, which takes some time getting used to. Um, but it hasn't changed we're still we're still the same we have you know our animals with us.

Q: What kind of animals do you have?

Ortiz: We have a cat and a dog

Q: I love cats, ohhh hi.

Ortiz: There's a dog on the floor yeah, so we're the same we I think as a couple. The only thing that like our goal is to travel together a lot, and so we do. We go to Disney at least once a year, which is our big thing. That was our first trip as a couple, and then we've gone to Arizona together. We were supposed to go to Oregon in May but because of everything, we've had to

push it back. My cousin was supposed to be graduating with her masters and so we're going to go over there, like she really likes my family from Oregon. And they really love her, they like love her to death. And so we're probably going to go at the end of July.

Q: Can you describe to me your regular day of the weekend or week day that you and your way experience together, any hobbies what do you guys do?

Ortiz: Um so on the weekends when we're not working, we it depends. We have weekends where we're like doing things the whole weekend ad but like a low key weekend um, on Saturdays. I get up and we clean together like her job is the kitchen and I'll clean the rest of the house. Um cause she told me I'm OCD and I have to have things a certain way, like she'll clean the kitchen I'll clean everything and then we'll shower and we'll make dinner together. And we'll just watch tv, and then on Sunday will go like before all this stuff to like the flea market. We would go to Monterey, we would go to the flea market in Modesto with my parents, we would go to the movies. We were always out and about on the weekends, we would take the dog walking, we go hiking all that stuff. But it's you know now it's different. (Laughs)

01:07:08 Q: Okay so you mentioned to me that you and your wife love Disneyland, why? What's so special? I mean I've been there once and honestly I'm more about like Universal Studios (unclear) What's so special about it?

Ortiz: I think it's honestly me, um because growing up I wasn't allowed to watch Disney movies so I had never gone to Disneyland until I went with a senior trip with North County. And I loved it, like I loved everything about it, I am obsessed with Disney. And so it's become our thing, like our couple thing. Um, we go to Disney we just for everything like the first year we went it was my second time ever being there. We got matching tshirts we got ears the whole thing, and um it was just so much fun. Like the right my wife does not like roller coasters at all, so the right side Disney you know they're not really crazy they're like for kids.

And it was just so fun to experience it, and one of the relationship things that we said like we always she's obsessed with Tim Burton. And so one of his really famous movies is The Nightmare Before Christmas, I love that movie. That's our thing we our room is decorated with Jack and Sally stuff. We have a bunch of Jack and Sally stuff I collect now Jack and Sally things, I have all bunch of ornaments. Our christmas tree is generally you know our decorations are Jack and Sally a nightmare before christmas. So it's become our thing like whenever we have stuff it's Jack and Sally, like our pillow case.

Q: I honestly just saw that movie like literally the beginning of this year. My little cousin had a birthday party and it was the theme. Like your saying they had all bunch of stuff and I was like what is that? And they're like oh this movie, and I was like I've never seen it, I literally just saw it I think it was like the beginning of this year.

01:09:08 Ortiz: Yeah, and I hadn't watched it either I because of my parents, I wasn't allowed to watch it. And you know how it looks so scary and stuff, but definitely didn't watch it until I was involved with her. And she loves Tim Burton movies, so one of the cool things that we have actually right before we got married, I wrote a letter to Tim Burton. I don't know where is at right now but I wrote a letter to Tim Burton, and I told him like you know my wife is a huge fan all this things. And he sent back a postcard of one of his drawings to us, which is really cool. In the transition I don't know where it's at, it's probably one of the boxes packed up.

Um, we so that's one of our other things, I've watched now I've watched all the Tim Burton movies. He had um a gallery opening in New York, um at the Neon museum we had all bunch of his displays. And we went there we I like bought her tickets and we went, so that's one of our obsessions now. Like Tim Burton I collect all bunch of nightmare before christmas stuff. And Disney is just a really cool like I feel like as a child I didn't get to experience it. So now as an adult, I'm getting to experience it. I've she's made me watch like a bunch of the Star Wars movies. We just went right before everything happened and right before Disney shut down for the food and wine festival, we went. I went to Stars Wars side of it because we hadn't been since they opened it up and we went. We got in all of the rides, I and I know that she loves showing me like these movies. And she got such a kick out of how I haven't seen this movie you know, I wasn't allowed to watch this and so she loves it.

Q: Why weren't you allowed to watch it, because of your parent's religion?

Ortiz: Yeah, they considered Disney like not a good thing to watch I guess.

Q: Oh wow, I didn't know that.

Ortiz: Yeah, and then my parents don't go to the movies, they don't go to movie theaters or anything like that. So that's one of my favorite date nights now, I love going to the movies with my wife and anytime there's something new will go watch it. Like any of the Avengers, new Star Wars like we go like as soon as it comes out we'll go watch it.

01:11:06 Q: (Laughs) How did you do with the last movie Avengers, how was it?

Ortiz: Um, the one before where he snapped his fingers and then everybody disappeared, I was really mad that they left it like this. But I really liked how they did it, I really liked it um I love the movies now so yeah.

Q: The whole saga of their movies.

Ortiz: I really I love when there's movies like that, like I had never watched Harry Potter, which was another one. Um again, anything with magic and stuff my parents were like you're not watching that. So when I got with her we watched all the movies, we've made my sister now watch them all. Lots of fun and the last christmas we had was Harry Potter things, like we had a christmas tree that had a bunch of Harry Potter stuff. So every year because I was raised without

a tree, we get a tree and we do a different theme every year. We've done Nightmare Before Christmas, we've done Harry Potter. Um, and then this year we're going to do Star Wars yeah.

Q: Is your sister still in that religion like your parents but she's more accepting or she's just okay with the way you know you do things differently now?

Ortiz: I think that she, I don't know I she lives with my parents but she doesn't really go to church anymore she doesn't practice. Um, and she I think we're in a place where she just wants to participate in everything we do. Like whenever we have christmas parties or something like she's out in my house a lot. So that's why she came over yesterday because it's been really hard, like she during the week on every Friday we go hiking together me and my sister. We stopped doing that because of everything we can't go to the parks anymore. Um, and then generally on the weekends we do something with her, like it's always the three of us me, my wife, and my sister. Like we go to my parents or something, so I think she just really just likes being a part of whatever we have, and she's really open to everything now so.

Q: Do your parents still live in Castroville?

Ortiz: Yeah, they live in Castroville.

Q: And you live in Salinas correct?

Ortiz: um ha

Q: Cool, um so I do know that many people still don't accept the LGBTQ community, have you and your partner ever experienced any discrimination like in the streets, at store or anywhere would you.

01:13:31 Ortiz: Um, I think that's a really good thing about my wife she's really hard to dislike. She's very likeable person, so even if you don't really agree with our lifestyle because of how she approaches you it's hard not to respect her. So we haven't really you know faced to anybody who's been rude to us. We have gone out and sometimes men will say things very you know disgusting things. Um and we just ignore it because I mean at the end of the day you can't change someone's mind. And if they're going to say disrespectful things like that there's no, my wife always says there's no point in arguing under crazy person. So just you know let it go and don't let it affect your day.

Q: Right, um so overall you know when you guys go out in the street I mean do you guys try to hide who you guys are? Or you guys just act normal and you guys you know what it's okay.

Ortiz: Yeah, we're like a normal couple we hold hands, we have our wedding rings on. We it's kind of funny we a lot of people think that we're sister sometimes. So like if we're I think one time we were at the flea market in San Jose we're getting like a big Mexican harro with the cups. And so my wife was negotiating with him to get a cheaper price, and he was like talking about he

was like from Michoacan. I was like oh my parents are from Michoacan too, and hes like ohh usted es son hermanas, and I was like my wife started laughing. And she's like no she's my wife and he actually did give us a cheaper price because of that. He's like oh I'm sorry, I'm sorry but I always think it's funny when people mistake us like sisters because we look nothing alike.

I am darker skin, I have dark straight hair my wife is very light and she has really curly curly hair. We look nothing alike, none of our features look alike and I always think it's so funny that people think like you know that we're sisters. Or they assume we're sisters or something, like they just think sisters and I'm like we look nothing alike. But we're never experienced I don't think we've ever experienced anything like too harshly. No we do regular things, for our wedding anniversary, who went to Monterey to Carmel. To this restaurant and she let them know ahead of time that it was our anniversary, and they did a really nice set up for us. So I feel like maybe it's because it's California. We'll went to Arizona we did get you know stared at a little bit, but nobody straight was straightforward and said anything so yeah.

01:15:59 Q: What part of Michoacan are you guys from?

Ortiz: My mom's from a little town, I don't remember the name of it but she's like from a little pueblo, and my dad is from Morelia.



Q: Cool, um I'm from um I was born in Michoacan in Uruapan, that's why I was like yay Michoacan. (laughs). Are you guys part of any clubs? Do you guys um in the community the LGBTQ do you guys you know participate in anything?

Ortiz: We occasionally we'll I know that there's it's hard because we're older, so a lot of the things are for you know younger kids. Like the um, center that is here in Salinas it's for like a teenage crowd, but I always volunteer. I always say that if they have an event will volunteer um we do go to events that fundraise like I think last one we went to was a drag queen fundraiser in Castroville. Um it was around um when was it? Maybe it was in December last last December, um they were fundraising for I think it was aids or something. And so we went to that, we bought our tickets we got VIP we went. And then we'll do the pilot they do know because it's more family oriented here in Salinas. They do it here in Toro Park and we'll go, I think we took her niece last time we went, so we do things like that um and yeah.

Q: How do you see yourself in 10 years from now to 10 years?

Ortiz: In 10 years i'll be 38 um, I hope that we have moved out into the house, um I see in our future maybe we'll have a 10 year old kid. Or no like an eight year old kid by then, that's what you know we're talking about. And I still want to travel with her, I still our goal is to visit each state at least once. And so I've done Oregon Seattle, and Hawaii I've been to Hawaii and Arizona. And so together we've done Nevada and Arizona, We're going to go to Portland

together. That's a third state, so that's our goal to each year go to at least one state together. So I hope we're still doing that one and 38.

Q: So you are planning to have kids? How are you planning on doing that?

01:18:22 Ortiz: Um, we've talked about it, see we're gonna buy sperm and just do it at home together, yeah.

Q: All right, um do you see that changing your family um do you how do you see that process, you know coming.

Ortiz: Um, I don't know it's hard to say because with my family they still I think my parents still have a really hard time with it. And so I tell her sometimes I get really sad thinking about it because you see all these revealed videos and you're telling your parents and they get really happy. But my parents I don't know to be honest, they will either be really I think my mom might be a little bit better with it. Then my dad I know that my dad still struggles with it a lot. So I get sad sometimes thinking about it because my dad has not come over to my house, my mom comes over to my house. And she'll visit or she'll come in I'll paint her hair, she'll come and watch movies with us. Like she'll so that sort of thing, but my dad I think had a really hard time.

And to him it's like he doesn't want to condone my relationship so he won't. He won't come over because he he's like if I come over I'm telling her that her lifestyle is okay and it's not

okay. So it's hard because I think pregnancy it's like supposed to be one of the happiest times of your life right. You're creating a new life, but on the flip side of it I know that my parents might not accept it and my you know, I think my fear is that they will treat the child like it's not fully mine. Because I'm having to go get something from someone else and that's my fear of it. I would never want my child to get treated differently than you know if they were to have grandkids from my sister. Um but I still really at least want one child I still want to do that, we've talked about adoption you know. Having one baby and adopting a child maybe that's older, um so that's kind of what our future, what we want for our future.

Q: Right, um if you could if you could go back in time and change anything, what would it be and why?

Ortiz: I definitely think that I would change the relationship I was in with Mayra and the way that I came out to my parents. Because I feel like it could of been done in a better way, and they feel like you know um maybe if I had come out in a different way to them, it would have made the transition easier for them. I do think that, but sometimes I look back at it and I say, no matter what or how I would have come out. It just would have been a really it would have been a bad situation. Either way and at the end of the day regardless of how much pain I went through, I did learn something from that relationship. And it took me exactly to where I'm supposed to be at now.

01:21:22 Q: Right, I mean it's hard in any way you see it I could imagine, I mean am never in that position. But I mean I could imagine that it's you know in many ways that you did it, was still going to be hard for them. Like you said, it's still been hard for them till this point you know, many years later. Um, but (unclear) I would say it's better than it was before because now you're you know your mom it's a little more accepting. Your dad you know it's not fully there, but at least is there.

Ortiz: Yeah.

Q: Whether you know, rather than other families that I know that oh they don't talk to the daughter. They don't talk to the son because yeah there you know their sexual orientation. So I mean I feel like you're definitely at a better you know place than other people are so um that's good.

Now let me ask you, how is this quarantine going for you? I know we talked a little bit about it in the interview but I didn't want this to kind of overwhelm you. But how is quarantine going? Are you still working? Um what's going on?

Ortiz: Yeah, so we're both still working um so she works at pick and pull it's an auto body dismantling place on Spence road. And I work for the county so unfortunately my department we still have to work, were considered essential workers were considered faster workers. So we have to work so I'm still working my regular hours, um I think it's really stressful when you think

about everything. And I have a lot of contact with the community because of my job, and so does she so I think that's the only thing that we're scared of like bringing it home to each other. And like essentially because I at least have contact with at least 20 people every day. I'm at work at least so I mean that's the scary part. Um but we're just trying to you know we wash our hands, everything that you should have been doing already. You know being clean all that stuff, we're already doing it, were we're not going out on the weekends unless we have to go get groceries you know. We're just trying to stay home and just you know not relax, but I mean relax but it's been hard. I think it's really scary when you watch the news and everything that's happening it's super scary.

Q: Right, (Unclear) protective gear at work like masks or gloves or?

Ortiz: Yeah, so I wear gloves um I wear gloves we have a window that's like covered. So thankfully you know the contact doesn't too much um she wears gloves she wears a mask so she's pretty well protected.

01:24:04 Q: How long do you think this is gonna last for?

Ortiz: I think it's gonna go past the cut up date I honestly do, um I mean it took China supposedly three months. So if we look at when we started quarantine like and I think even after we stopped quarantine, because a lot of people don't show signs. When once we the quarantine is

over and people start interacting again, I think it's gonna you know the people who were not showing signs, the more carriers are going to give it to other people.

Q: And I honestly believe that the way we are here um doing quarantine is not really the best way. Because people are still going out, people are still meeting together and if you compare well I'm not really sure. But what I've seen in the news, China there were a little bit more um you know like strict on their people. So I feel like that's the reason why they were able to come out of it a little bit faster. And even then I still think it's too soon for them. Um so I honestly I mean don't think it's gonna end anytime soon.

Ortiz: Yeah.

Q: That sucks, um but I was totally eager to ask you but I really wanted to do it at the beginning of the interview. But I was like I don't want to overwhelm sir, so I'm just gonna start with the easiest stuff. And I'll ask her at the end of the interview, so I know that we talked a lot about a lot of things, um I thank you for that. But is there anything else that you would like to add in the interview that I didn't ask you about? Anything that you would like to tell me? Ask me anything.

01:25:35 Ortiz: Um no I mean I think we're pretty much, hold on. I have a dog and if I don't he doesn't get my attention is going to get all.

Q: Aww I wish I had one.

Ortiz: Yeah, he's a good dog.

Q: I have three guinea pigs that's what I have, those are my babies.

Ortiz: Yeah, I have the cat and a dog, well she's had the cat, she's had him since he was a kitten. So he's old and he got him, he's a rescue he's about 11.

Q: Oh wow.

Ortiz: No, I think we covered everything, I mean basically you know everything we do as a couple. Yeah it's been four years, it's crazy our anniversary our four year anniversary was on April 7th. So and it sucks because we can't do anything we couldn't do anything we just ordered in and we just watch the movie together.

01:26:37 Q: But I mean better safe than sorry right.

Ortiz: Yeah, it's been nice like we've got to spend time together, we're just here we play games we paint. One of my hobbies I like to paint stuff and I'm obsessed with Frida, so I have all bunch of Frida things. Yeah that I paint um which was nice they were gonna do a museum opening in San Francisco (unclear) opening. And now like well we can't go and they're being a really impacted so I don't necessarily know I want to go yeah.

Q: Everything, I know it sucks I know my birthday is coming up in July and I'm like I hope that by then. Cas I have seen all the memes like oh it's your birthday and like the cake and everything (unclear)

Ortiz: (Laughs)

Q: Like why, but I mean hopefully and this will be over soon that way everybody could go back to their I would say normal lives. But you know, now we are more you know.

Ortiz: Aware.

Q: Aware of what's going on and you know hopefully this helps us because I feel like this is a way of well I know that I wish I would have asked you a little more about now that you're not in that um you know religion. You know we did talk a little bit about how you see you know think that everything is connected, and how you don't go to church and stuff. But you do talk to someone up there you know you believe something is there. Um, and so in my case I do I am a Catholic since I was could have memory. and um so I feel like in my personal life, God is telling us you guys need to change the way you guys are living because you guys are messing up this planet.



Ortiz: Yeah that's what my wife says she always because she's Native American she she talks about the planet and mother earth. And she's like we've been treating her so bad, and like and it's interesting. Everybody is in quarantine and like there's like I think in Paris, I can't remember where it was like the canal, it's been so polluted and now.

Q: I think it's in I think it was Italy.

01:28:40 Ortiz: Yeah, and then you look at all these things, and like we drove this morning to get something to eat and it looks so green and so beautiful. And it's crazy how we humans we just like for example wearing the gloves and the masks. People are littering and it's that has always been one of my things, I hate when people litter. I don't litter I recycle everything I'm big on okay if I'm out and about and I see trash and there's a trash can right there, I'll pick it up and throw it away. Because it's so simple and you don't think about like the consequences of you littering, it goes to the ocean. And all these things happen it's a chain reaction and it's crazy to see how like smog and like pollution is clearing up because we are not and about.

Q: Mm yeah so I mean I feel like everything like you said everything is connected. We are all connected no matter what we do, um so I mean I feel like the consequences are this. You guys need to stay home so they here we are. Like I'm not working I'm still going to school, but I mean everything is virtual so there are some times where it's like dam like this is so boring. And you know you watch your phone you watch your media now you're you know TV. But then you're like now you're tired of watching TV.

Ortiz: Yeah or you want to go out and do things yeah I still am taking my dog walking when it's nice. It's kinda raining here so I'm still taking them on walks and stuff, but we're trying not to go out as much. Like even if we're at the grocery store, my wife was like timing us like okay we need to go we need to get out of here. Like then she wears gloves and she she's more susceptible to it because she's been a smoker for so long. That's like a family thing and like I've noticed a lot that a lot of Native Americans smoke a lot. When we went to Arizona, we were like at some like navajo thing like everybody was smoking. I'm like oh my gosh so she has lung things and I'm just like oh my gosh.

Q: She's so yeah they're saying you know people that have you know health issues please stay home because you know this is getting worse. Um my only hobby right now is go to McDonald's and get chocolate chip cookies through the drive through that's literally what I do. Literally I have to go because I haven't you know I drive so and it's really close by. It's the one here by El Super because I live literally right here um by the mall.

Ortiz: Yeah.

Q: Yeah so really close by, and not go to the one by North Main because they don't have the 13 box chocolate chip cookies. So I mean so I drive to El Super and then that's my that's my hobby that's what I do.

Ortiz: Yeah I have all bunch of art supplies so I've been keeping preoccupied like that and it helps with my anxiety. So they do I painted last weekend and then this weekend we painted so it's been pretty soon I'm going to start running out of things to paint.

01:31:32 Q: (laughs) Well you can paint your dog you can paint your cat, I wish O had talent to paint I would so paint my guinea pigs or something but I don't. Well Rebecca I know you probably have things to do, I know it's Easter I don't have anything to do although it's Easter. I'm not going anywhere probably gonna cook because it's kind you know it's 1 already and I got a little bit of meat so that I could um cas it was frozen. But um I thank you so much for your time um, really really thank you. I know I remember like I said when I your name didn't pop up because I mean there are so many people so I remember I was in class and then she gave us a roaster and this is who you're interviewing. Okay and people were like oh go to like um social media or go to like um you know. Because there are two communities the LGBTQ and then they're also doing um like a theater community.

So I was like um and then I started thinking about it and I'm like her name her name and then I'm like wait a minute. I think I used I think I was like I think I used to know, I was like wait and then I said you know I'm like no it is her and then I was like I know her and then my teacher is like cas I was like cas you know when your trying to talk to you by yourself but you're talking out loud. Like all confused and she's like wait wait you know her? And I was like yeah I think I do, and then I was like yeah it is her. And then she's like and then she's panicking she's just like oh my gosh was there any drama and I'm like not between me and her.

So I'm totally okay with interviewing her, you know I was like I was like as a fact I'm happy to interview her because I know a little bit about her not her but like (unclear) she was like oh that's cool and I was like yeah. But definitely thank you for your time um, I will be sending you so what Zoom or she was teaching us is that it does like a transcript.

Ortiz: Oh cool.

Q: So as soon as Google sends me that I'll go ahead and send it to you if you want to listen over it. I'll go ahead and send it that to you, I still don't know what we're doing, um because like I said at the end of the semester um she did say everyone's going to get together. And you know you would come into the classroom and I would make a presentation and just kind of talk about those key moments. Um but unfortunately we can't do that now, so I don't know what she's going to have us um do at the end of the semester. But definitely I have to transcribe this although the computer does it for me, I have to go over and transcribe it.

But I'll go ahead and send you that as soon as um Google send me that and then I'll let you know um if you know we're going to end up doing something at the end of the semester. But for sure I know we're not going to.

Ortiz: Yeah.

Q: Yeah you know together maybe virtually will probably do something. I don't know but um thank you so much for your time. Again, I'll go ahead and send you so this is the form you know you can't see it. But um it's just like you know I, your name and then what you're okay with what you're not okay with. Just initial I'll go ahead and send this to you over your email, and then once you sign it put your information on there. You can send it back to me the way I can sign it, get my information and then I could go ahead and send that to her. And then we will be all set with the interview process, and then um I'll let you know keep you updated as soon as I know if we're going to do something at the end of the semester.

Ortiz: Okay sounds good.

Q: Sounds great.

Ortiz: Thank you.

Q: Alrighty thank you Rebecca.

Ortiz: Okay.

Q: Bye.

Ortiz: Bye.

