

Not Yo Mama's Home Cookin':



the Changing Faces of Rural North Carolina

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Not Yo Mama's Home Cookin': the Changing Faces of Rural North Carolina
A Compilation of Rural Teen Perspectives
A Hidden Voice Project.

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Introduction Lynden Harris, Hidden Voices

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Cover Photograph Kids jumping at Franklin County middle school. Luis Velasco, 2006.

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A Sense of Place

Someone said,
“Perry’s Chapel.
That’s where my family is buried,
the ones that have passed.”
To which a girl responded,
“Mine are buried at my house.”
And a boy interrupted,
“Really? Mine are buried in the ground.”
So the girl rolled her eyes.
“Very funny.
No, it’s like,
there’s my house;
and there’s a graveyard.
She paused.
“My horse is buried in the pasture.”

This book is dedicated to the young people of rural North Carolina, whose willingness to explore new territory makes a vibrant community possible. And to the families of Franklin County: Jones, Wilder, Lee, Mitchner, Ramirez, Hernandez and all the rest.

Acknowledgments

Every creative work is an act of faith. Faith in the participants, in the process, and in the outcome, however unforeseen. Every Hidden Voices project is a journey through uncharted territory to an unknown destination. From those first tentative steps, through the inevitably trying middle journey of choices made and sometimes regretted, to the final arrival *somewhere*, we trust that creativity, dialogue, and interaction are their own reward. We must believe that connection is not only possible, but necessary, however uncomfortable and unpredictable. It takes courage to embark on something so tenuous; it takes faith that the journey is what matters.

This project would not have been possible without many acts of faith by many individuals and institutions and by their donations of vast time and talent. Melinda Wiggins was instrumental as both a scholar and supportive counselor. Minnie Shirey valiantly exceeded her teacherly duties by gamely entering a theatrical and creative world she had never hoped to inhabit. Sahar Moursi brought us grace and good sense, and Joseph Till was most helpful in organizing the initial workshops. Sally Gold, Elizabeth Peacock, Corrie White, and Camelia McCandies served as writing and performance mentors without once losing their good humor. Luis Velasco inspired the students with his photography and Tracey Broome and Ellen Ozier helped make the students' exhibit a reality, as well as assisting with a host of other tasks. Kerstin Lindgren, Ilda Santiago, Tony Macias, Lupe Huitron, Marie Garlock, and Courtney Doi were instrumental at various points along the path with their translation, editing, and organizational skills. Finally, Silvia Candejas came through with her talents as a designer and brought us this book.

A number of organizations and institutions supported the project. The ArtsCenter in Carrboro, resident base for Hidden Voices, hosted the premiere photography exhibit, performance, and book signing. The North Carolina Humanities Council supported the project from its inception. Their mission, to bring North Carolinians together to make sense of this world we share, continues to inspire us. The Terrell Lane Middle School generously opened its doors and cafeteria to *Not Yo Mama's Home Cookin'*. And as always, we are indebted to the many individual and corporate donors whose generosity and belief in a more humane world makes Hidden Voices possible.

We would also like to thank Student Action with Farmworkers, the Center for Documentary Studies, the UNC-Chapel Hill Apples program, and Delta Psi/St. Anthony Hall for their support of *Not Yo Mama's Home Cookin'*.

Most of all we want to acknowledge the students who gave up their afternoons to participate in something entirely unfamiliar. We all admire their openness. As usual, we began this project with almost nothing, not even a vision. Only questions. And a belief that honest dialogue opens the possibility of a more deeply shared humanity. Thankfully, we were right.

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Not Yo Mama's Home Cookin': the Changing Faces of Rural North Carolina

During recent years an influx of immigrants from around the world, many of them migrant workers, has come to call North Carolina home. Though they have not arrived unnoticed, as individuals within the larger community they often remain largely unknown. Our curiosity about the changing faces around us prompted Hidden Voices and Student Action with Farmworkers to create a project giving voice to young rural teens from different ethnic backgrounds.

The mission of Hidden Voices – to challenge, strengthen, and connect our diverse communities through the transformative power of the individual voice – resonates with the NC Humanities Council's direct call to bring North Carolinians together to make sense of this world we share. And SAF's broad charge to educate the community about farmworkers' lives includes an intention to build coalitions working for social change. Social change is certainly happening in rural North Carolina, some of it intentional, much of it not. And so we decided to explore the perceptions of young people living in areas of unexpected demographic shifts. A wealth of options arose: engage the teens in written and spoken word, traditional and contemporary movement, music, visual art, and photography among them. Nowhere in the initial plans was there any mention of a book. Trust me; I checked my notes. But a book is what we now have.

Franklin County was suggested as the site for this project; it has a large population of migrant workers and is in many ways under-served and under-resourced. Because I have family ties to Franklin, Warren, and other eastern counties that go back hundreds of years, I was intrigued by the possibility of connecting with teens whose lives could have been my own. For generations my family has lived along the Tar River, an area now owned by Scandinavian biotech firms and Japanese businessmen and inhabited by a mix of immigrants from Vietnam to Yemen to Mexico to Egypt. It is this surprising mix of cultures, increasingly widespread in rural North Carolina, which brought us finally to Terrell Lane Middle School.

Louisburg, North Carolina is a town of about 3,000; it boasts both the nation's oldest two-year college and the state's official "Chitlin' King." Obviously, this was the place to be. The North Carolina Humanities Council provided funding for the project; the school system selected Terrell Lane; the administration helped identify the students; and the students began talking. *What is life like in a rural town? How do you interact with others whose cultural differences are as immediately apparent as the language they speak? What are your dreams, fears, and preconceptions? How would you change things if you could?*

Essentially the questions were all *What is it like to live your life?* The students wrote, talked, took pictures at school, home, church, Wal-Mart, and then they talked some more. Luis Velasco, from the Center for Documentary Studies, shot photographs of the students working with their own photos. He then captured them in portraits that revealed something of their lives at school. A group of interns from UNC-Chapel Hill arrived and asked more questions. In the end, through our efforts to share stories about everything from the food we eat to the place we sleep, we found ourselves mapping something of the new Southern identity, outlining the new face that is us.

What did we find? That the worlds within Franklin County are predictable and unchanging and at the same time as surprising as the headscarf framing the ESL teacher's face. That many of the African-American kids prefer to be called Black, that the Latino kids are in truth Mexican and proudly so, that the White kids self-identify as Rednecks. In short, that their worlds and the words springing from them are fresh, vibrant, and

immune to our preconceptions. And, of course, that they have some great recipes.

We have compiled these writings and conversations from hundreds of pages of text. Some of our conversations spanned weeks, though the text may cover a page or two. We have changed only what is necessary for comprehension and sometimes not even that. We hope the authenticity of these young people's verbal search reads as immediate and unchallenged. The students are honest in their questions and assertions, and that is as it should be when attempting to inspect truly important issues such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, and musical tastes. It takes courage to voice an opinion that may be dismissed or derided. But, as one girl so succinctly put it, doing so in a mixed group is very "socialize-ative."

How these young people will look back on these years and whether they will stay in the area are questions we could not answer but also could not help but wonder. We wish them well. It is amazing to be present in the face of a changing gestalt. And quite engaging to hear over and over from a group of students, "I'm confused." Good. So are we all.

Step inside the world of young Franklin County teens and discover a place their parents could never have envisioned.

Lynden Harris
Hidden Voices, May 2006

Writings

Creative writing draws out our deepest, unexplored perceptions and makes them a visible offering to those around us, good food for those willing to eat. The pieces in this section were written over the course of four months as we explored our lives as children, friends, and strangers. Here are those lives in our own voices, in writing that unsettles, comforts, dreams, and discovers. We hope that in writing honestly about our different worlds, we open the possibility for a shared one.

This is where it all begins, *in Franklin County*, home.

In Franklin County

In Franklin County you can:

Do nothing.
Get arrested for everything:
Drinking,
Drugs,
Murder,
Stealing from the Dollar Tree.

In Franklin County we have:

The best Mexican restaurant
Ever,
The best Barbecue
And Chinese buffet
Ever.

In Franklin County you can:

Get famous for being in Playboy,
A dance competition,
Writing a book,
Or being smart at school.

In Franklin County there are

Many cultures:
Mexican,
Black,
Muslim,
Jewish,
Egyptian,
White,
Chinese,
Christian.

In Franklin County

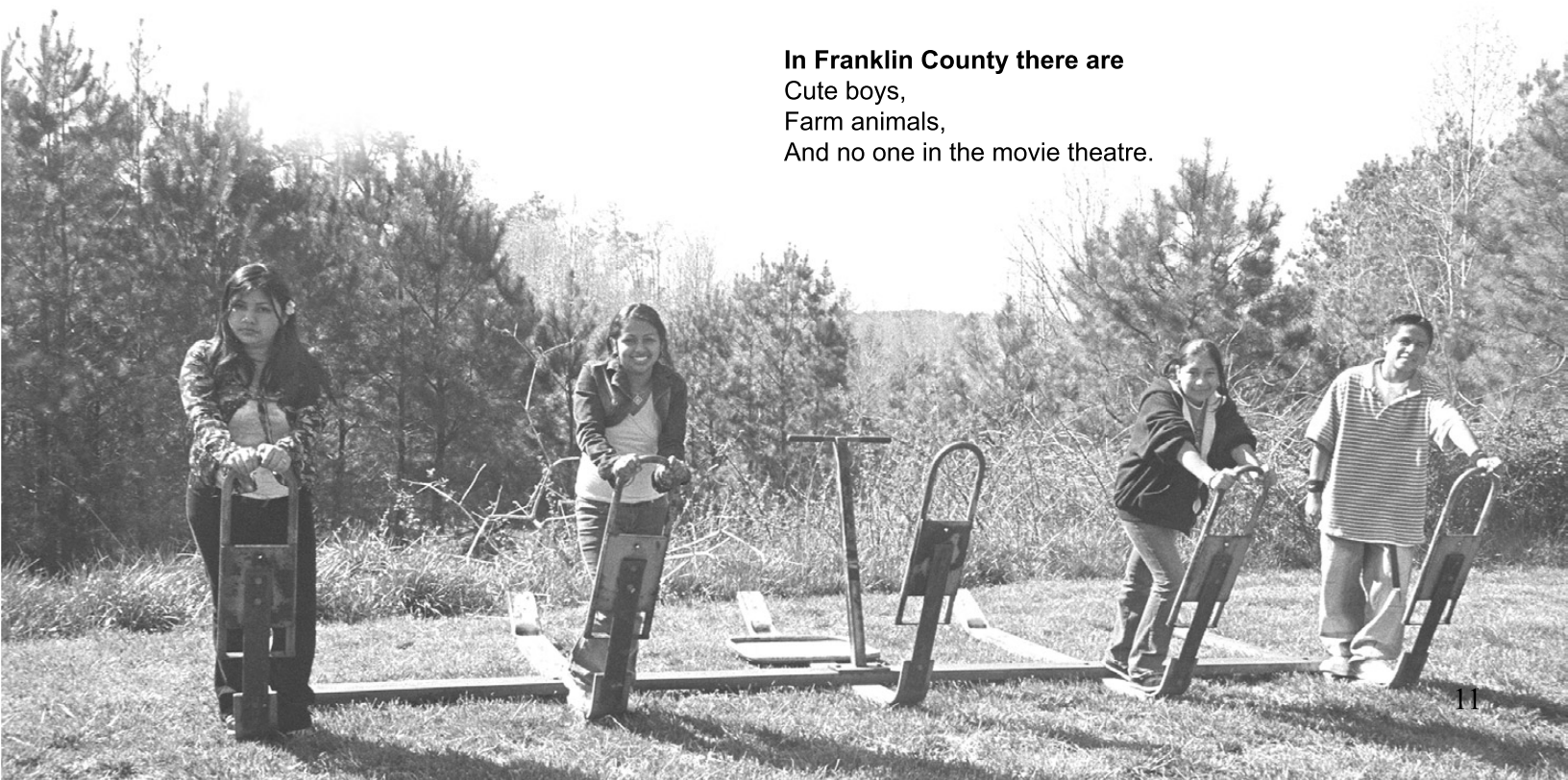
They'll put you in the paper for sports:
Baseball,
Football,
Volleyball,
Swimming,
Band,
Soccer.
Is band a sport?
No, but we have the best bands ever.

In Franklin County there are

No bowling alleys,
No whales,
No maguey,
And no skyscrapers.

In Franklin County there are

Cute boys,
Farm animals,
And no one in the movie theatre.



in Franklin County



Franklin County is where
My school is,
Rednecks live,
I was born and raised.

Franklin County is where
People gossip and things get
around fast,
My friends are,
My cousin died.

Franklin County is where
People go hunting:
Deer,
Turkey,
Goose,
Duck,
Rabbit,
Squirrel.

Franklin County is where
Movies are cheap
And you can shoot off fireworks in your front yard
And not get arrested.

Franklin County is where
Wal-Mart is (where my grandma works)
Where everywhere they're tearing down trees
For new housing;
Where you can have a soybean field
For your front yard.
Backyard, too.

Franklin County is where
There are lots of trailers
And lots of tobacco,
Where the action is,
And old folks are
Where people rejoice,
And go to church.

Lindsay Harrison

was born in Louisburg. She enjoys being on the swim team during the summer, playing basketball, hanging out with friends, and listening to bluegrass and country music. She admires Jesse and her friends.

We began by creating a list of imponderables, things we or others had wondered but would never ask, having been “raised right.”
We can't say that!
But perhaps we just did.

What I Wonder

What I wonder about white people, black people, brown people is:
Why they are so different when they have lived here so long.
Why they talk the way they do.

What I wonder about Latinos is:

Why they wear bright colors,
Why they like such spicy foods,
How they grow their hair so long
and curl it the way they do.
Why they have different work,
Why they drink so much beer,
How they draw so well,
Why they need green cards to live here.
Why they talk the way they do.

What I wonder about black people is:

Why they greaze their hair,
If they listen to more than rap, hiphop, R&B,
Why they don't like to swim,
Why they are so mean.
How they style their hair,
Why fried chicken is their favorite food,
Why they think they're special,
How they dance so good.
Why they talk the way they do.

What I wonder about white people is:

Why they are so crazy,
If they like their food,
Why so many drive trucks,
How come they can't tan so good.
Why they have better jobs,
Why they cut their hair so short
and color it all bright
Why they don't have too much children
Why all the Presidents are white.
 Wait. Are all the Presidents white?
 Yeah.
 Are you sure? I never thought of that before.
 So, why are they all white?
 Pause.
Why they talk the way they do.



Brittany Hicks

was born in New York. She enjoys skating and basketball. She admires her mother.

All the project participants were some combination of three ethnicities, with the exception of our “token” Egyptian ESL teacher. As we explored what it meant in popular culture to identify with a particular group, we began telling and writing our own jokes, starting with Yo Mamas and gravitating toward various versions of “You might be a redneck if . . .”

You Might Be

Match the following:

You might be a:

Redneck
Latino
Black

If your truck is

So low your mama needs a knee replacement
So old your mama rode it to first grade
So high your mama needs a stepladder

You might be a:

Redneck
Latino
Black

If you’ve ever cooked

Something your dog brought home.
Something you hit with your truck.
A neighbor’s pet.

You might be a:

Redneck
Latino
Black

If you’ve ever mowed the grass and found

A car.
A relative.
A camper top.

You might be a:

Redneck
Latino
Black

If you’ve ever had to appear in court because of

Your dogs.
Your roosters.
Your music.

You might be a:

Redneck
Latino
Black

If you

Burn your yard instead of mowing it.
Sweep your yard instead of mowing it.
Don’t have a yard.

You might be a:

Redneck
Latino
Black

If you ever lost

Your wife in a poker game.
Your pit bull in a poker game.
Your rooster in a poker game.

You might be a:

Redneck
Latino
Black

If you have more than

5 KFC bags in your car.
5 Taco Bell bags in your car.
5 Bojangles bags in your car.

You might be a:

Redneck
Latino
Black

If you have more than five animals

sleeping on your bed .
chained in your yard.
waiting to be eaten.

You might be a:

Redneck, Latino, Black

If your tires are worth more than your vehicle.

Wait, which one is . . .

Throughout our writings and conversations, we vacillated between noticing our differences and discovering our similarities, as individuals and as members of different groups.

We Are



We decided to uncover as many stereotypes as we could, those we encounter in the media and those that live inside us. The process forced us to be honest with ourselves and, as a result, sometimes more generous with each other. Reading these, we were surprised, unsettled, pained, and amused.

White People/Black People/Latino People Are

How People Are

White people are talkative, smart, ensterring, weird, funny.
Black people are good dancers, very talkative, prednate, nice.
Latino people are nice, fast talkers, Spanish-speakers.

White people are fun, nice, smart, loud.
Black people are loud, troublemakers, friendly.
Latino people are nice, hard-workers.

White people are rich, smart, and ignorant/race's.
Black people are gangsters, cool, and funny.
Latino people are cool, brown prichers, and gangsters.

White people are pretty, talkative, fat, boring, rich, and from England.
Black people are good dancers, funny, and mean.
Latino people are nice, fast talkers.

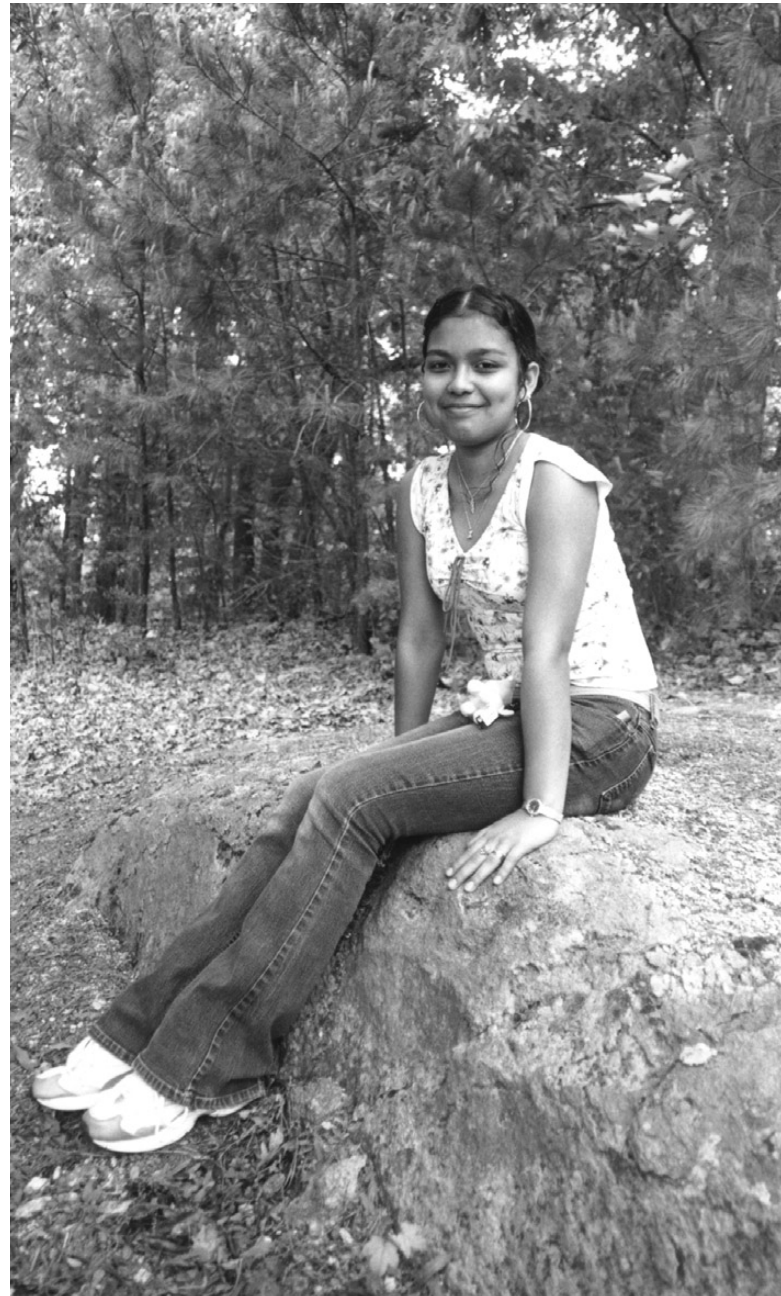
White people are silly.
Black people are ugly.
Latino people are drunks.

White people are nice, short, smart, rich.
Black people are kind, tall, cool.
Latino people are nice, funny, fashionable.

White people are funny.
Black people are bad, mean, and funny.
Latino people are crazy, nice, and funny.

Itzel Estrada

was born in Acapulco. She enjoys listening to music and shopping and admires the band, El RDB.



What People Do

Black people are fast food workers.
White people are country people.
Latino people are hard workers and work in construction.

Black people are truck drivers, construction workers, fast food workers, preachers.
White people are preachers, farmers, business men.
Latino people are farm workers, car washers, construction people.

Black people are singers.
White people are teachers.
Latino people are farmers.

Black people are fast food workers, preachers, and teachers.
White people are surveyors, lawyers, teachers.
Latinos are fast food workers and drug dealers.

Black people are construction workers, preachers, and lawyers.
White people are doctors, lawyers, teachers.
Latino people are hard-workers, farm hands, construction workers.

Black people are fast food workers, prichers, and princepuls.
White people are teachers and truck drivers.
Latino people are construction workers and teachers.

What People Eat

White people like to eat pigs.
Black people like to eat pizza.
Latino people like to eat tacos.

White people eat deer.
Black people eat chicken.
Latino people eat tacos.

White people like to eat deer, pizza, corn, and fast foo.
Black people like to eat everything.
Latino people like to eat hot food, salsa, Spanish rice.

White people eat deer and squirrels.
Black people eat pig intestines.
Latino people eat frijoles.

White people eat pizza, deer, chicken, pigs, cats, and dogs.
Black people eat potatoes, beans, and cookies.
Latino people eat tacos, nachos, beans, plants, salsa, posole, ponche. And pizza.

White people like to eat deers
Black people like to eat pizza
Latino people like to eat Mexican food.

White people like to eat pizza.
Black people like to eat seafood.
Latino people like to eat nutrition food.

White people like to eat deer, goose, turkey, duck, BBQ, pasta.
Latino people like to eat tacos, tortillas, salsa.
Black people like to eat chicken, chitlens, colored greens, mashed taters.

What People Listen to

Latino people listen to reggaeton, ranchero, and Spanish rap.

Black people listen to rap.

White people listen to country.

Latino people listen to country.

Black people listen to rap.

White people listen to rock.

Latino people listen to reggaeton, durangense, cumbia, salsa, merenge.

Black people listen to hip hop.

White people listen to country music.

Latino people like to listen to Spanish.

Black people like to listen to rap.

White people like to listen to country.

Latino people like to listen to rebelde, mariachi, charanne, country and western.

Black people like to listen to rap, rock and roll, hip hop.

White people like to listen to rock.

Mexican people listen to Daddy ya-ya.

Black people listen to rap and R&B.

White people listen to rap.

Latino people like to listen to their children.

Black people like to listen to rap and country

White people like to listen to country and rap.

Latino people listen to Spanish, rap, and salsa.

Black people listen to rap, preachers, 97.5

White people listen to country, preachers, 94.7 WQDR.

I love to listen to black people, the old ones.

Anahi Hernandez

was born in Mexico. She enjoys watching TV, riding her bike, and boys. She admires her boyfriend, Rey



What People Talk About

Black people like to talk about people.
Latino people like to talk about cars.
White people like to talk about hunting.

Black people talk about weed.
Latino people talk about work.
White people talk about fishing.

Black people like to talk about their kids and other people.
Latinos like to talk about cars, soccer, and other people.
White people like to talk about music, shopping, and other people.

Black people like to talk about bear.
White people like to talk about fishing.
Mexican people like to talk about girls and boys.

Black people like to talk about weed, gangs, and money.
Latinos like to talk about drugs, money, and cars.
White people like to talk about hunting.

Black people like to talk about basketball and other people.
Latino people like to talk about soccer and work.
White people like to talk about hunting and shopping.

Boys like to talk about cars, girls, and sports.
Girls like to talk about boys and make up.

Girls like to talk about notes, magazines, and fashion.
Boys like to talk about girls, sports, and cars.

Boys like to talk about Star Wars, cars and sports.
Girls like to talk about BOYS. And music. And hair.

Boys like to talk about girls' butts, breasts, cars, and sports.
Girls like to talk about makeup.

Girls like to talk about boys, makeup, and their boyfriends.
Boys like to talk about girls, sports, and their girlfriends.

Black Girls like to talk about boys, clothes, and shoes.
White girls like to talk about boys, makeup, shopping, and shoes.
Latino girls like to talk about boys, clothes, and jewelry.

Black boys like to talk about girls, cars, and sports.
White boys like to talk about girls, cars, hunting, and fishing.
Latino boys like to talk about girls, cars, and sports.

Basically, girls like to talk about boys.
And boys like to talk about girls.



Pablo Guerra

was born in Mexico. He enjoys playing keyboards and soccer.

What People Have

Latino people have earrings, long hair, jewelry, tight clothes.
Black people have CDs and big families.
White people have boyfriends, crushes, guns, notes, and issues.

Latino people have long hair and good cars.
Black people have radios, houses, and shoes.
White people have guns, schools, and pets.

Latino people have big families.
Black people have big butts.
White people have freckles.

Latino people have money, food, big mouths, soccer stuff.
Black people have big families, 4 wheelers, and football stuff.
White people have money, food, freckles, and 4-wheelers.

Latino people have cool cars, big families, long hair.
Black people have big mouths, big families, and curly hair.
White people have shotguns, 4 wheelers, and smooth hair.

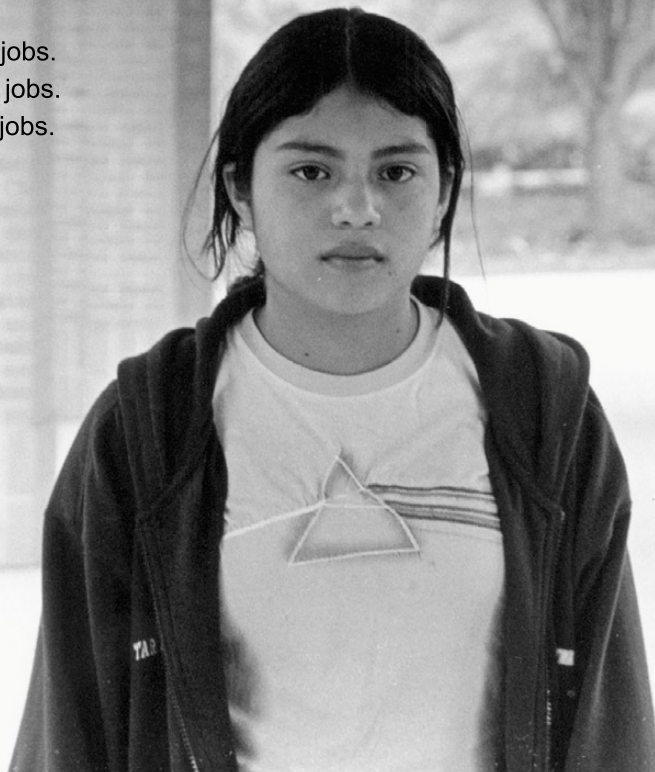
White people have guns and good hair.
Black people have radios and greaze hair.
Latino people have bikes.

Latino people have brown hair.
Black people have black hair.
White people have yellow hair.

Latino people have hard jobs.
Black people have many jobs.
White people have easy jobs.

Rose Mora

was born in Toluca, Mexico. She enjoys soccer, loves to dance, and admires Pink Floyd.



Worry about

Black people worry about money.
Latino people worry about girls.
White people worry about the country.

Black people worry about being pregnant.
Latino people worry about their hair.
White people worry about the weather.

Black people worry about their work.
White people worry about their kids.
Latino people worry about their jobs.

Black people worry about children.
White people worry about jobs.
Latino people worry about family.

Black people worry about their family.
White people worry about money.
Mexican people worry about getting fired.

Black people worry about how they look.
White people worry about their grades and how they look.
Latino people worry about their reputation and how they look.

Erin Davis

was born in Raleigh. She enjoys dancing, playing volleyball, shopping, country music, and talking to her friends. She admires her mom and grandma.



Bradley Johnson (BJ)

was born in North Carolina. He enjoys running track and playing his trumpet.

Black people worry about jobs.
White people worry about how many deers they shot.
Latino people worry about what car to trick out.

Black people worried about they family.
White people worried about they family.
Mexican people worried about they family.

White kids' parents worry about grades.
Black kids' parents worry about fighting.
Latino parents worry about children.
My parents worry about bills.
The weather.
Their kids.
Their families.
My grades.
My dog.
Me.

What if we really wanted to get to know a person but could only ask twenty questions? How do we cut through the stereotypes and social strictures? Here are twenty we'd ask, twenty more we had to cut, and one that stands alone.

Twenty Questions: Getting to Know All About You

The Final Twenty

1. What should your nickname be?
2. Who is the most important person in your life?
3. What are you most proud of?
4. What do you do in your free time? (Do you have any free time?)
5. What kind of music do you like?
6. Who is in your family?
7. If you could have any animal in the world for a pet, what would it be?
8. Whom do you admire?
9. In all the world, where do you really want to go?
10. Have you ever been to a funeral? Whose?
11. What's your favorite kind of weather or season?
12. Do you smoke, drink, do drugs?
13. Would you tell me if you did?
14. If you were going to get a tattoo what and where would it be?
15. What is your culture and how important are those traditions to you?
16. If you could have one talent in the world what would it be?
17. What is something about you that your friends don't know?
18. What's the best and worst advice you ever received?
19. What is the weirdest thing you've ever eaten? Like alligator, frogs, etc.
20. What is your lifelong dream?

Questions We Cut Under Protest (and Some Answers, Too)

1. Do your parents call you one thing and your friends another?

"Alyx, cause my full name's Alexandria."

Sweet pea.

Awww.

My dad calls me that.

Wacho.

Titi.

2. Do you like dancing?

"What if they said they liked to waltz?"

Pause.

"Okay, how 'bout do you like parties?"

3. Why are you always angry?

4. Have you been anywhere outside the US?

"How about outside the state?"

5. Do you have any animals?

“Dogs.”
“Cats.”
“Roosters.”
“Cows. Well, not my own but they’re all over the place.”
“Chickens and pigs.”
“And a donkey that won’t shut up.”
“Pigs sound like girls.”
“A rabbit. Her name is Luna.”
“Horses.”
“Goats.”
“Do you eat them? Some people eat them.”
“Sheeps.”
6. What size shoe do you wear?
7. If you got arrested, what would it be for?
8. Have you ever tasted a beer? What kind?
9. What is your favorite food?
“I have eat everything like you have here -- rabbit, squirrel, deer --”
“Squirrel’s good!”

“Chitlins, they taste good.”
“I’ve never had chitlins—I don’t like the way they smell.”
“I’ve had fried alligator.”
“Did you kill it?”
“No!”
“Frogs. They go kill frogs.”
“Some people eat snails!”
“Ooh, what’s the nastiest food you’ve ever had?”
“Sushi!”
“Rice and gravy.”
“Dog food.”
“Dog food?!”
“It smells good; the kind in the can.”
“Whoo.”
10. Do you bite your fingernails?
11. What kind of things do you keep to yourself?
“Secrets?”
“But also things you don’t say. Because they aren’t polite.”



12. How much money do your parents make?

"Ooh, that's good – then I can come to your house and ask them to give me some."

13. Do you eat your macaroni with a spoon or a fork?

"Fork."

"Spoon."

"My fingers."

14. Do your parents have tattoos?

"Cause my dad has about 60 of them."

"Where?"

"On his arms and on his legs."

15. What is your idea of comfort food?

"Queso."

"Chicken noodle soup."

"Chicken and dumplings."

"Vanilla cake."

"Chocolate."

"Grilled Caesar salad."

16. Who is the most important person in the world? Not to you, just in the world.

17. What do you put on your fries?

"Ketchup."

"Mustard."

"Salsa."

"Barbecue sauce."

"Vinegar!"

"Vinegar on French fries is really good."

"Honey mustard on French fries is so good."

"Honey! Honey on French fries is GOOD! Plain honey."

"I put honey on my biscuits and my French fries."

"My grandpa eats honey on everything."

18. Are you a girlie-girl or a boyie-boy?

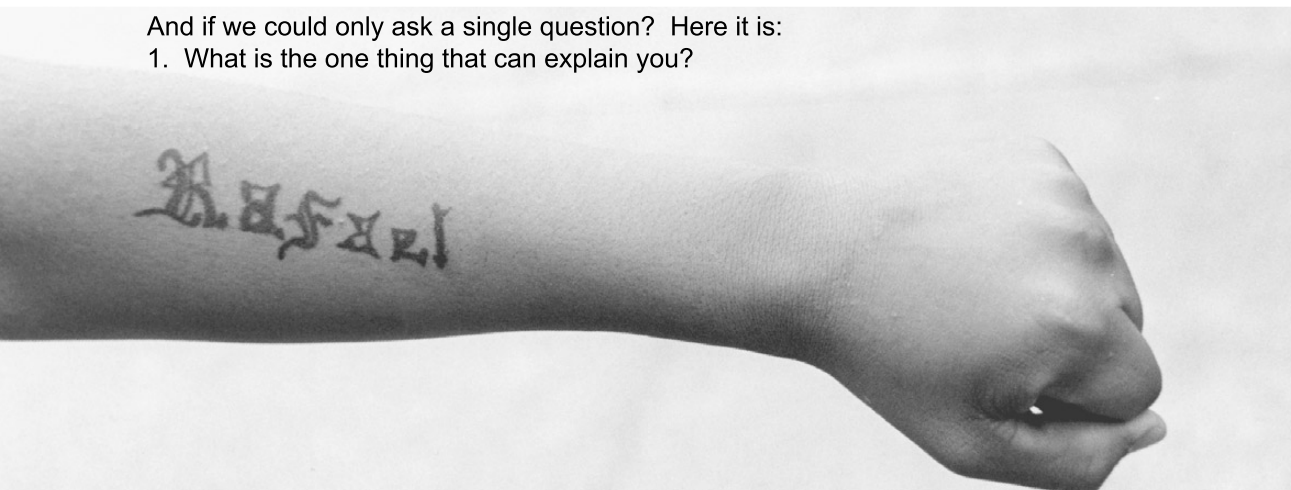
19. Have you ever had a crush and was it secret?

20. Do you have any hot brothers?

The One

And if we could only ask a single question? Here it is:

1. What is the one thing that can explain you?



We decided to spend some time questioning ourselves about identity in relation to our gender, our culture, and the expressions that seem purely our own.

Because I am

Because I am a girl, I like clothes and rings and wear my hair long.
Because I am Latina, I like Mexico city, reggaeton, and my friends are Latino.
Because I am me, I like my family.

Because I am a girl, I like boys and makeup.
Because I am white, I like rednecks and country music.
Because I am me, I like my 4 wheeler.

Because I am a boy, I can do more things than girls.
Because I am Latino, I like to listen to El RBD.
Because I am me, I like to play soccer with my older brother.

Because I am a girl, I like boys and clothes.
Because I am white, I like horseback riding.
Because I am me, I like my Papa.

Because I am a girl, I like boys.
Because I am black I like rap.
Because I am me, I like . . . me.

Because I am a boy, I like riding my 4-wheeler.
Because I am white, I like going to the mall, watching TV, getting on the computer.
Because I am me, ain't nobody like me.

Because I am a girl I like volleyball.
Because I am white, I like to eat duck, geese, and deer.
Because I am me I like to dance.

Because I am a boy, I like low riders
Because I am Latino, I like soccer.
Because I am me, I like music, all kinds.

Because I am a girl, I like Johnny Depp.
Because I am white I like, no, I LOVE country music.
Because I am me I like being exactly who I am.

Because I am a boy, I like girls.
Because I am Latino, I like chicken fighting
Because I am me, I like one certain girl.

Because I am a girl, I like being beautiful.
Because I am Latina, me gusta mi piel morena
Because I am me, I like being strong and independent.

Because I am a girl, me gusta ir de compras y pintarme.
Because I am Latina, me gusta escribir en mi idioma.
Porque soy yo, me gusta ser libre.

Because I am a girl, I like purple.
Because I am white, I like rock and country music.
Because I am me, I love my family.

Because I am a boy, I don't like to wear makeup and or go shopping;
I don't kill myself; and I can get a girl pregnant.
Because I am Latino, I like chickens, go to Virginia to fight chickens.
Because I am me, I listen to everything: country, rap, even rock.

Porque soy Latina me gusta la musica Mexicana.
Porques soy mujer, me gusta pintarme.
Porque soy yo, me gusta ser yo.

Bradley Beckham

was born in Raleigh. He enjoys talking to friends and admires his mama.



What about our dreams for the future? As it turns out, our dreams are as individual each of us. About the only thing we had in common is that more than one person thought a ferrier was a fairy godmother.

Our Dreams Have No Color

Hygienist	R.N.
Waitress	Pharmacist
Teacher	Writer
Lawyer	Chef
Plastic surgeon	Environmentalist
Astronomer	Teacher (ESL or Language)
Doctor	Pediatrician
Vet	Fashion Designer
Nurse practitioner	Soccer player
Ferrier	Marine biologist
Musician	Or
Farmer	President

Our favorites times of the day and the week. The moments when we are the happiest and so the ourselves.

My Favorite Time

When the sun rises and there's dew on the grass. I like the sound of the doves.
Saturdays at night. There are parties and music and dancing.
The morning, when I wake up to see my family and friends.
Friday night because I get to go to basketball games.
The evening because I can go to sleep.
The morning because I sneak out of my room and watch TV and play the computer.
Saturday afternoon cause I get to be gone somewhere. And ride my 4 wheeler.
When I'm in bed listening to my radio.
Monday because I have my first dance, clogging, and it's my fav.
Whenever I'm with my friends.
Sunday in the afternoon because my dad takes us to Raleigh.
During dinner with my family.
Friday about 7 or 8 because I go out.
The early morning. Where I live, I am surrounded by trees. When I step outside, the fresh, cool air wakes me up.
Sunday because I go shopping.
My favorite time of the day is night.

Almost all the students grew up in either Franklin County or Mexico. Speaking of the tastes and smells of home gave us a momentary glimpse into each other's lives.

Memories of Home

The smell of Pinesol reminds me of home,
The taste of fried chicken and fresh summer air.
Home is the place I ride my 4 wheeler.

The smell of cinnamon incense reminds me of home,
The taste of apple pie.
Home is the place I keep my horse, my dog, and my goldfish.

The smell of a rose reminds me of home, of my friend's perfume in Mexico.
The taste of salsa.
Home is the place I cook, clean, take care of my brother, and do my homework.

The smell of fried chicken reminds me of home,
The taste of Pepsi.
Home is where I sleep, but up with my four sisters and their babies watching TV.

The smell of eggs reminds me of home.
The taste of fried eggs
Home is the place I relax, where my family lives, and my hamsters multiply.

The smell of smoke reminds me of home,
The taste of spaghetti.
Home is where my family comes for the holiday, where my whole childhood is, where my dog sleeps.

The smell of chicken reminds me of home,
The taste of cereal.
Home is the place I relax, where my family lives, where I love.

The smell of food reminds me of home,
The taste of pineapple.
Home is where I can play my favorite music on my brother's stereo when he isn't around.

The smell of wood reminds me of home,
The taste of freshly-shucked corn.
Home is where I eat frozen peaches, play with my cat, and get good ideas.

The smell of cut grass reminds me of home,
The taste of my mom's vanilla cake.
Home is the place where my rabbits live.

The smell of the woods reminds me of home,
The taste of pecan pie.
Home is the place I fight with my brother, watch TV with my mom, and spend Friday nights with my dad.

The smell of my brother's perfume reminds me of home,
The taste of chocolate cookies.
Home is the place where my brother bothers me.

The smell of perfume reminds me of home: mine, my mothers' my brother's, my dad's,
The taste of maruchan.
Home is where I sleep.
Home is the place where my brothers sleep.

The teenage years have a magic all their own that has little to do with gender, race, education, class, or even home cooking.

The Best and Worst

The worst thing that ever happened to me at schools was:

I ripped my pants in the cafeteria.

I fell down the steps in front of the whole cafeteria.

I fell out of my chair in class.

I lost my best friend the last day of 6th grade and had to say good-bye forever.

I tripped.

I asked someone out and he said no.

Someone stole my money.

I fell down in the ice and mud.

The worst thing that ever happened to me at school was getting a certain girl mad at me. Oh, boy.

The best thing that ever happened to me at school was:

I met my friends.

I made it to Regionals in the science fair.

I got a good grade on my report card.

I passed my grade.

I made the volleyball team.

I passed all of my grades.

My new boyfriend kissed me in the hallway in front of everyone!

I met my best friends.

I won the art award in the Art Show.



Erin May

was born in Raleigh. She enjoys spending time with friends, listening to music, riding her golfcart, and shopping. She admires her mom and grandma, step sister and older cousin.

Few of the participants had been to homes outside their own culture. In this piece, we move from the outside of our homes, which may be quite different, to our rooms, which are more alike, to the place where we all dream of things vast, terrifying, and possibly wonderful.

The Place Where I Now Live

The place where I live is surrounded by fat oak trees, tobacco fields, cows, grass, cricks, ponds, spiky pinecones, the smell of smoke, and tall switching grasses. Standing outside I hear the Mexicans jamming to their music, the lawn mower, and small bugs cricking. My bedroom has dirt stain footprints on the floor and cobwebs on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of boys, adventures, people getting shot, people dying, things I want to happen and sometimes things that even do.

The place where I live is surrounded by Hispanic people and white people. Standing outside, I hear the birds sing. My room has mirrors on the ceiling and carpet on the floor. At night I lie in my bed and dream of being on a game of soccer: Mexico vs. USA.

The place where I live is surrounded by trees and squirrels fighting over a cell phone. Standing outside, I hear my dad's roosters and birds, loud like a jackhammer. My room has stains on the floor and a poster of my favorite band in a concert on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream if I could make new friends and if I could meet my favorite band, EI RBD.

The place where I live is surrounded by grass, trees, and fields. Standing outside I hear 4-wheelers and grasshoppers. My bedroom has squares on the floor and popcorn on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of dancing at my dance recital.

The place where I live is surrounded by trees. Standing outside I hear birds. My bedroom has flowers on the floor and light on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream I have a child and I am playing to my friend in Puerto Rico.

The place where I live is surrounded by trees, houses, woods, cars, people, dogs. Standing outside I hear the birds singing. My bedroom has squares on the floor and light on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of animals talking to me.

The place where I live is surrounded by de plantas de color azul y amarillos. Standing outside I hear como cantan los pajaros. My bedroom has alfombra on the floor and luz on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of mi familia.

The place where I live is surrounded by green. Standing outside I hear birds. My bedroom has rugs on the floor and stars on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of a place with nice people and fun.

The place where I live is surrounded by trees. Standing outside I hear the birds. My bedroom has carpet on the floor and wood on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of my family.

The place where I live is surrounded by woods, pine trees, and ponds. Standing outside, I hear birds and frogs. My living room has hardwood on the floor and wood on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of dancing on Broadway and becoming a professional volleyball player.

The place where I live is surrounded by woods, trees, trails, and a store. Standing outside I hear birds, cars, and crickets. My bedroom has sand and ocean on the floor and pictures on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of crazy things, stuff that happens at school, being chased by a man with one eye, things I want to do when I am older. I dream of swimming with dolphins.

The place where I live is surrounded by cows, grass, trees, ponds, and an airport. Standing outside I hear airplanes and cars. At night I lie on my bed and dream of girls mostly.

The place where I live is surrounded by trees, pine trees, and rocks. Standing outside, I hear frogs and grasshoppers. My bedroom has blue carpet on the floor and a white ceiling. At night I lie in my bed and dream of my family and my life I have, and other things like falling off tall buildings.

The place where I live is surrounded by tall pine trees, soybean fields, and long dirt roads. Standing outside I hear birds chirping, bees buzzing, 4-wheelers running, and guns shooting at deer. My bedroom has soft blue carpet on the floor and popcorn on the ceiling. At night I lie on my bed and dream of wild horses running across open fields in Kansas.

Are there concrete things we can do to bridge the gap between our cultures? Are there ways to break through what is expected into a more promising future?

Coloring Outside the Lines

We color outside the lines when we
Sit at a table where we don't "belong;"
Invite someone from a different background to our house;
Choose a career because we like it,
not because people expect us to do it;
Try food from another culture;
Decide to like food from another culture;
Say hello to someone when they might not answer;
Learn a different language;
Change our minds;
Refuse to be limited by other people's stereotypes;
Refuse to be limited by our own.

Olivia Stone

*was born at Nash General in Rocky Mount.
Olivia enjoys dancing and admires money,
Mama, Daddy, and her best friend.*



Conversations

In these conversations, we offer sometimes brutally honest assessments of the world we experience in the media, in our communities, and in our own thoughts. As is often the case when family gathers around a table, the conversations open with a joke and move into sometimes harrowing territory. But we always end up somewhere different and richer than the place we began.

A Black Guy and a Latino Guy Open a Restaurant: a Conversation about Race

Talking about jokes gives us the opportunity to look at our culture from a certain perspective and so develop our own. In some cases, we developed not only our own perspectives but our own jokes.

The joke:

A black guy and a Latino guy open a restaurant.

Know what they're calling it?

Nacho Mama.

Pause.

Hey, if you add a redneck, you can call it Nacho Mama's Home Cookin'.

"What is racism?"

"Discrimination."

"When you think that your race is superior to all other races."

"So, how come there's a Black History Month but they don't have a White History Month?"

"Because of the slavery and stuff like that."

"I know why! Because we celebrate white, we celebrate us, you know what I mean, the other eleven months."

"No we don't."

"Yes. White men get all the credit. I mean, they get everything."

"Is that prejudice?"

"Yeah."

"I don't want to be rude or anything, but I don't think there are any Latino gay men because I be going in a store and they all be blowing their horn at me. And they be like, "ayayayay." Latino men are always looking at you."

"It's true."

"Look at the Latino boys – they're nodding."

"The white men think it, they just don't say it."

"It's the culture."

"What if you say Asian people are good at math? Is that their culture? Is that racist?"

"Yeah."

"No."

"It's an opinion."

"But if you said Asian people are better than white people, then that's racist."

"It's about being better."

"What about black people being good dancers? Is that racist?"

"I don't know."

"Not unless you're saying someone else isn't."

"It confuses me."

"It's about not liking a different group than yours."

"If you say that black people are terrible at math, that's racist. Because it's negative."

"Is it?"

"I don't know!!! It's confusing."

"When you say, like, the white people is much better than the Mexicans. That is what it is. Racismo."

"If someone calls me a cracker, I don't care. But if someone calls me a cracker and I call them a "nigger", they get all mad."

"Sometimes they act like we owe them something, like, because of everything that happened, like, 500 years ago. When they had the, you know, slaves."

"How long ago was it that they couldn't do all that stuff -- go to the same schools, drink at the same water fountains, sit in the same movies?"

"Way, way back before my Papa (grandfather) was born."

"It was the 60s."

"Oh, wow. Really?"

"But it makes us feel bad because it has nothing to do with us. Just has to do with how people felt way back then and it's not like now it isn't equalatery."

"Are people equal?"

"Not really."

"But they think all white people are racist."

"Are you?"

"No! At least I don't think I am."

"Last year in gym class I was just standing there and this girl bumped into me and she said, 'Excuse you.' And I said, 'I was just standing here and you're the one who bumped into me.' And she said, 'You need to move.' And I said, 'But I was here first.' And she said, well, some bad words and said I was racist."

"It makes us feel bad just knowing they think that about us."

"Is she racist or is she just mean?"

"This is my own story. Yesterday in my class I called (this girl) a black monkey and she said that means I called her a "nigger", but I didn't. She called me ugly. And that's just what I said to her."

"And is that racist?"

"No. Everybody else got offended but if they get offended I don't care. It wasn't racist."

"Yes, it was!"

"What is race?"

"Your culture."

"Your background."

"Where you came from."

"The country you come from."

"Are Mexican people a different race than people from Puerto Rico?"

"Yeah."

"What about people from different states in Mexico? Are they different races?"

"If they have different ways of doing stuff."

"So, is someone from up north a different race than someone in the South, say someone from Texas and someone from Massachusetts. Are they different races?"

"Yeah."

"Sometimes."

"It depends on what you're trying to say to that person."

"I think it's more back. Like if you're an American, where you came from in England or Asia. Way back. I think that's race."

"It's where you're from, your culture, your people."

"But Mexicans aren't all the same race. That's what you said."

"I don't know."

"One of my teachers, she said, 'Can you call somebody from Mexico an American?' And everybody said no. But you can because Mexico's in South America."

"But usually when you think of Americans you think of here."

"You do? Who is you?"

Why Do Mexicans Have Cabbage Patch Dolls: A Conversation on Immigrations

Talking about jokes gives us the opportunity to look at our culture from a certain perspective and so develop our own. In some cases, we developed not only our own perspectives but our own jokes.

The joke:

Why do Mexicans have Cabbage Patch dolls?

"Oh, I know, I know. Cause they get 'em from the fields? Where they're working?"

Pause.

No, because they have birth certificates.

"That's mean."

"Why?"

"Cause they got here illegally."

"The dolls?"

"No, the Mexicans."

"Is that saying they don't have green cards?"

"No, you have to have a birth certificate to cross the country."

"You do?"

"I thought you had to have a green card."

"You have to have a birth certificate to get a green card."

"Don't they have birth certificates in Mexico?"

"That show *Black.White*? It just shows you. The black man couldn't get a job at this bar but as soon as he came in as a white person, they gave him a job on the spot. And everybody accepted him. And I thought that was just mean."

"Some people are just racist."

"Yeah, they call me wetback."

"What? What is that?"

"It's just a bad word."

"It means he swammed over here and is not legal."

"He swam? The ocean?"

"No, the river."

"I thought they didn't like to swim."

"That's black people."

"I have a question. You know how there was slavery?"

Selene Rivera

was born in Mexico City. She enjoys listening to music and admires her brother.



Was there any Mexicans in slavery?"

"I think there were some."

"Well, we took a lot of their country, right?"

"We did?"

"Isn't Mexico right up against some state?"

"Many states – Texas, New Mexico, California."

"So, why is it a different country?"

"My friend, she's Indian, and nobody really represents Indians or nothing like that. Her mama is full and her daddy is white and you never really hear anything about famous Indians."

"Powwow."

"Except when you go back into American history, way back into the American Revolution and stuff like that."

"There's the Sacagawea coin."

"There's no Native American week."

"It's cause they all died."

"They really discovered our countries."

"Yeah, they were here before any of us were."

"We just took it."

"English people are mean."

"I want to say something. How come everyone talks about Canadian people being stupid? I'm 1/8 and I don't like it."

"So, do you know why there ain't any Indians left? Cause my friend's mama, she's the only Indian I know left in North Carolina."

"It's cause we brought all this disease over from Britain. So they weren't immune to them."

"I'm part Cherokee."

"Me, too."

"My great-grandmother was full-blooded."

"My grandpa's part."

"Why did we have to take over all their land? I think we should have to have one of our states dedicated just to them."

"Wait, who owns all the land in the United States? I mean, the land I live on, could the President come and take our land? They couldn't do that could they?"

"The people like, some friends I have, they discriminate on other people and the other people feel bad. They say, 'You're Mexican; you're not supposed to be here; you're not supposed to be where you live' and that can make you feel bad."

"That's what people tell me but I ignore it. I don't care what people think."

"I run into that sometimes. Some situations, but I feel that this is my country. I am a citizen, I don't care. You are a citizen; I am a citizen; I look differently but I am a citizen like you. But the most important thing is do you really believe that you belong here or you don't care about belonging here? Do you care about what people say?"

"I don't care what they think because those other people are not people who are ever going to get out of the situation where they are and aren't going to get ahead. They should worry about themselves instead of worrying about other people. And the people who don't worry about us are the people who are going to make something of their lives."

Amberr Ferreira

was born in North Carolina. She enjoys cheering, stepping, and listening to music.



How Many Police Officers Does It Take to Arrest: A Conversation about Jobs

Talking about jokes gives us the opportunity to look at our culture from a certain perspective and so develop our own. In some cases, we developed not only our own perspectives but our own jokes.

The joke:

How many police officers does it take to arrest a Mexican?

Four. One to arrest him and three to carry his oranges.

"Why is that funny?"

"Cause Mexican men steal oranges?"

"No, they pick oranges. They're farmworkers."

"I thought they were tobacco workers."

Let's do a redneck version.

How many police officers does it take to arrest a redneck?

Four. One to arrest him and three to:

"Hold his shotguns."

"Hold his deer."

"Hold his hunting dogs."

"Hold his beer."

A black version?

"There aren't any black kids here today."

"Okay, we'll leave that for another time."

"Do you think Latino people don't care about that kind of stuff, like who the President is and all?"

"They too busy."

"That's funny how they said how all the Presidents are white. I never thought about that."

"But why isn't there a Latino president, or a black person president, or something else?"

"I think we'll have a black man or a Latino man for president before a woman. No one respects women these days. They think we're not smart enough to be President."

"They'll elect any kind of man before a woman."

"Well, we can change that if we work hard and get a good education."

"White people are cocky."

"They think they're better than other people."

"I think a lot of people here don't respect the Latino people that are here. I don't think they give them as much respect as they should."

"Really, I don't think it's fair either, cause they're just coming here to get better jobs and when they come here, people treat them like –"

"Dirt."

"Yeah, like you shouldn't be here and you shouldn't get our jobs, and I don't think that's right. They should be able to get good jobs just as much as anybody else in this country should."

"But some people are talking about how they're taking all our jobs."

"They aren't taking the President's job!"

"What jobs are they taking?"

"Construction work. Cause every time, if you look up there – well, I'm not trying to be mean or anything – I know you have the right to work like we do and everything but it's mostly them."

"Why do white people have better jobs?"

"Because they smart."

"Because we care more about our work, I guess."

"Not all of us do."

"Why come Mexicans, well Latinos, can't get better jobs, like they work at MacDonal'd's and cleaning, and motels and stuff, cause nobody won't accept them or they just don't want to do something else?"

"Those the only jobs we can work."

"Because they not legal."

"Not only illegal, because of education, too."

"Some I see, they got better cars than we do. Do they get paid for being illegal?"

"Black people get paid for not working."

"Are there more white or black or Latino people on welfare?"

"Black."

"Black."

"Latino."

"No, white."

"Is that true? But that's weird."

"My parents are barely making it and we're not on it. I don't think it's great how they get all that money and all that. How is white people – are you sure?"

"So white people's more on welfare?"

"Whoa, they're lazy."

"Told you."

"Okay, Latino people, they don't have to pay taxes, right?"

"Yeah they do."

"They do? Do y'all pay taxes?"

"No."

"Well, y'all don't work. You ain't old enough."

"Our parents pay taxes."

"But they're not legal, though, right?"

"But even if a Latino person were legal, had the documents, and had the education, would it be as easy for them to get a job as it would be for a white person?"

"No."

"No."

"How come?"

"Because some people are racists!"

"They discriminate."

"Yeah, they're mean."

"Do you know how many Latino people there are living here in this country illegally?"

"A lot."

"Lots."

"A million almost."

"More."

"What if all the Latinos left?"

"If all the Latinos left, there'd be no more Mexican people!"

"Who would run the Mexican restaurants?"

"If they all left, everybody would get a job."

"Uhn-uh. Our economy would be good-bye. We'd lose a bunch of jobs."

"Cause they spend a lot of money here."

"Yeah."

"Who would build things and clean?"

"White people do that, too."

And black people."

"Yeah, but not as much. Mexicans do more cause they'll work wherever they have to."

"Latino people are more drive to work than white people. We are lazy. Seriously."

"Are white people lazy? Latinos?"

"Not really."

"I'm thinking."

"Sometimes we are. Some of us are."

"I'm lazy."

"And then there are some white people who are drive to work, they want to make a living. They're gonna make a good future for their families and stuff like that."

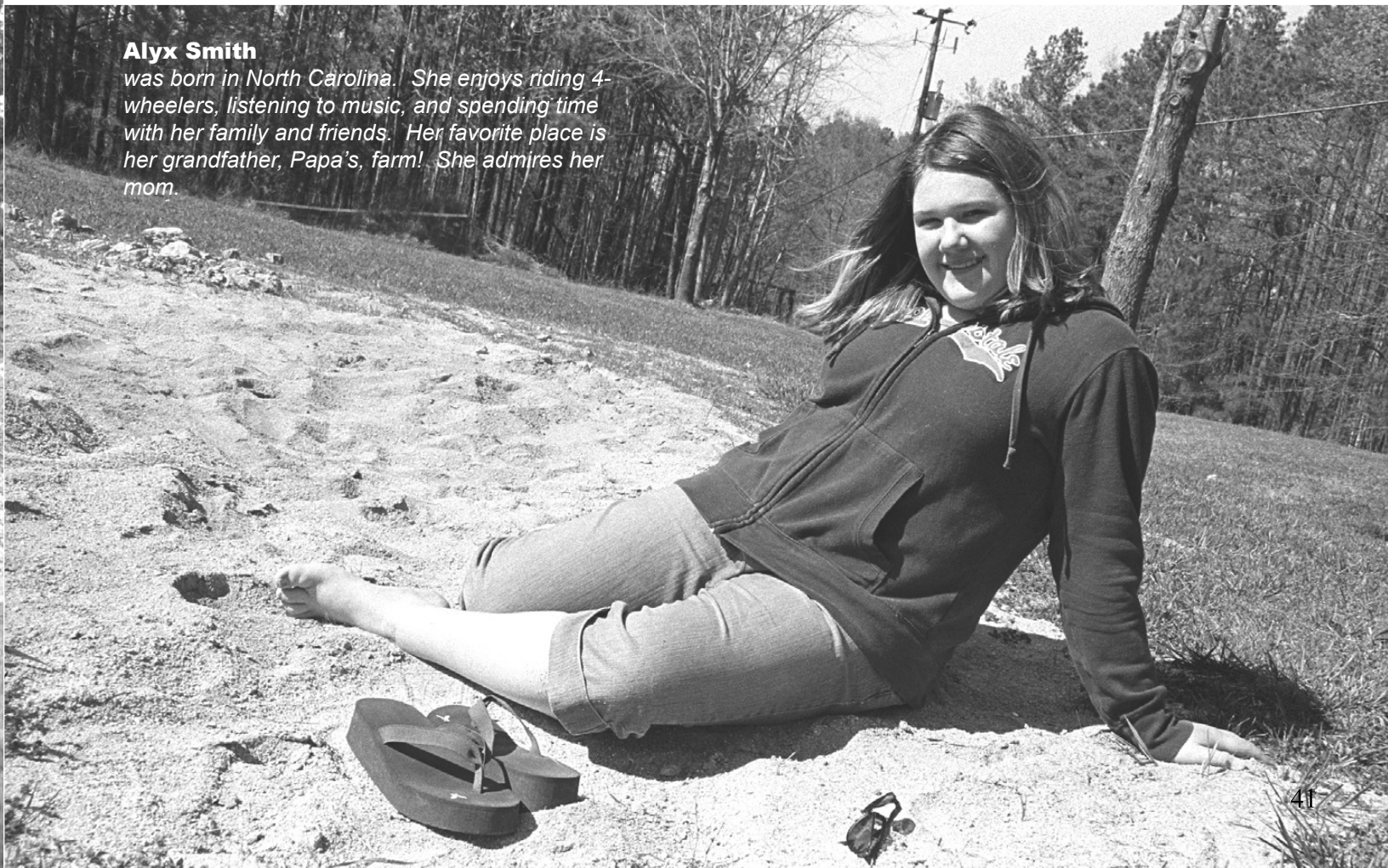
"I kinda think we are lazy because we have, like, all the good jobs and I think that we don't really understand that in Mexico they don't have all these different jobs and they don't make as much and they're willing to work harder –"

"We're taking advantage of our privileges."

"Yeah, that's what I was trying to say."

Alyx Smith

was born in North Carolina. She enjoys riding 4-wheelers, listening to music, and spending time with her family and friends. Her favorite place is her grandfather, Papa's, farm! She admires her mom.



A Mexican Comes to the US and Needs new Socks: A Conversation about Language

Talking about jokes gives us the opportunity to look at our culture from a certain perspective and so develop our own. In some cases, we developed not only our own perspectives but our own jokes.

The joke:

A Mexican comes to the US and needs new socks. He doesn't speak English, so the store clerk takes down item after item to show the Mexican. At every item, shirt, pants, hat, shoes, the Mexican shakes his head. Finally, the clerk brings down a box of socks. The Mexican nods vigorously and says, "¡Eso sí que es!" to which the clerk angrily blurts out, "Well why didn't you just spell it in the first place?!"

"What is it like to speak a second language? Or be learning to?"

"When you know another language, you can talk without people understanding you. Is good when you want to speak the other people and she not know you can speak in Spanish and she don't know what you say."

"And talking on the phone to your boyfriend!"

"When you want to have a job you can work better because you can speak two languages."

"What if a white person wants to be a waitress in a Mexican restaurant?"

"That'd be good because if a customer is white and they don't speak Spanish you can tell 'em what things are. I be telling 'em what I want and they get it wrong all the time."

"Spanish you have to talk quicker."

"In Spanish you say it and write it the same way."

"So, which language is harder to learn?"

"English!"

"I don't see how. I think Spanish is really hard."

"I have a question. When we're talking, do you understand all of what we're saying? Do you understand all of the English words we say?"

"Not all –some words I don't know them."

"Awww."

"Hey, some words in English I don't even know what they mean!"

"Is like me, it's the same thing in Spanish: some words I don't know and if I never hear that word before I try to remember for next time."

"How long have you been here?"

"Two years."

"Three years."

"Did you all know one English word when you came here?"

"No."

"A little."

"You all are so smart."

"I admire you for learning English."

"What about you? Do you speak Spanish?"

"I understand a little bit but I speak Arabic."

"Is that Muslim?"

"It's not a language, Muslim, it's Arab countries –"

Selena Juarez

was born in Mexico. She enjoys playing music and her friends.



"And that's your culture?"
"Yes, *that's my culture and Islam is my religion.*"
"Where are you from?"
"*What do you think?*"
"Egypt?"
"Yes."
"You've been to Egypt before?!!!"
"*That's where I'm from, yes.* "
"That's is so cool!"
"*Do you live in a sand house?*"
"I live in Cairo."
"*Not a sand house?*"
"No. It is a big city."

A White Man, a Latino Man, and a Black Man Are in a Boat: How Things Stay the Same

Talking about jokes gives us the opportunity to look at our culture from a certain perspective and so develop our own. In some cases, we developed not only our own perspectives but our own jokes.

The joke:

A white man, a Latino man, and a black man are in a boat –
Yeah, right.

"In the cafeteria, black kids sit together, Latino kids sit together, white kids sit together; that's just how it is."
"*Is that a good thing?*"
"No."
"*You don't get to experience other – I don't know. You don't get to meet a lot of range of people.*"
"A lot of Latino people, they talk among themselves. They don't really socialize. She does, sometimes. If she wants something. No, I'm kidding. They always talk among each other."
"*Why do they talk among themselves?*"
"They can understand each other better. "
"*They're talking Spanish.*"
"They don't want nobody to hear what they're saying."
"*It's good because you can know more things about people, their culture. You understand each other better.*"
"It's more comfortable."
"*But it's good to meet people who are different. So you can care about them. Instead of like just completely ignoring them. You can like, I don't know, start a conversation with them and stuff. Have somebody to talk to.*"
"It's easier to care about people you know."
"*But how does that happen if everybody always is separate?*"
"You could go to their lunch table and sit down."
"*They'd tell you to get up.*"
"They might not talk to you."
"*They would hit you.*"
"Hit you?"

"No, they'd hate you."

"They might hit you, too."

"They'd be like, weirdo."

"I don't like you; get up. Especially some . . . black people. They ain't scared of nobody. Well, some of 'em ain't, you gotta admit. Whoo."

"You could strike up a conversation. In the classroom. During class."

"Then they'd talk to you!"

"Like, I need help with homework or something."

"Or in the bathroom maybe."

"Sports. That's somewhere you can get to know 'em."

"Churches?"

"No. They all real separate."

"Parties?"

"Are parties mixed?"

"No."

"Sometimes maybe."

"Your birthday party you invite people you know. Nothing who you don't know."

"You can ask, 'Do you have a pencil.' They go, 'No.' And you'll be like, 'Thank you anyway.' Next day, go up, say hey to 'em, no don't say hey, wave to 'em, --sometimes I wave at her and she just looks at me -- "

"I can't imagine why."

"Just be friendly like that."

"Clubs?"

"We don't have clubs."

"No clubs."

"Beta Club. That's it."

"At my other school we had a lot of clubs."

"Nothing here."

"After school?"

"I used to have a Latino friend when I was like in third grade and I invited her over to my house but her mama and daddy didn't know how to get there."

"Any Latinos ever invite a white or black person to their house?"

"No."

"No."

"Si."

"Oh, I had a black friend once; she was a neighbor. She was so nice. We used to play baby dolls. She came to my house and wrecked my golf cart."

"Any white or black kids here ever been to a Hispanic home?"

"No."

"Any ideas?"

Silence.

Moises Roa

was born in North Carolina. He enjoys playing soccer and admires El RBD.



Whose Joke Is This Anyway: A Conversation about Race, Class, Education, and Gender

"What do you think is going to affect your life the most? Whether you're a girl or boy; whether you're black/Latino/white; how much money you have; or your education?"

"Money. Definitely."

"If you have money you don't need an education."

"Yes, you do."

"I think education is the most important. Then you'll have a good living when you grow up and you'll make money."

"I think it's your race. Like, people just hang out with their own race most of the time – well, like, they're friends with each other but you know? They hang out with their own. And they probably always will. And that's what will make the biggest difference."

"No, it's money. Because with money you can have more education. It gives you more possibilities for have a good job."

"People who have a lot of money go to private schools, so they can get a better education."

"It might be being a girl or boy. Because being a girl makes you closer to your family than if you were a boy. Cause you hear about all these moms that are so close to their children but the dads are like always away or something like that. They leave their families."

"Girls will probably stay closer to home even if they go away to college or for a job and the boys probably won't care."

"It's being a boy. Definitely."

"Boys can do more things than girls. A boy can get a girl pregnant and then she has to stay home with the baby."

"White girls, white people, can do anything they want, like they can get any job they want because they legal, but we can't."

"Why not?"

"Because we're not legal. You can have any education you want, a good education, but the problem is you can't go to college."

"Even if you can find one to go to you have to pay a lot of money. Out of country money."

"And our parents can't have money. That's a big problem."

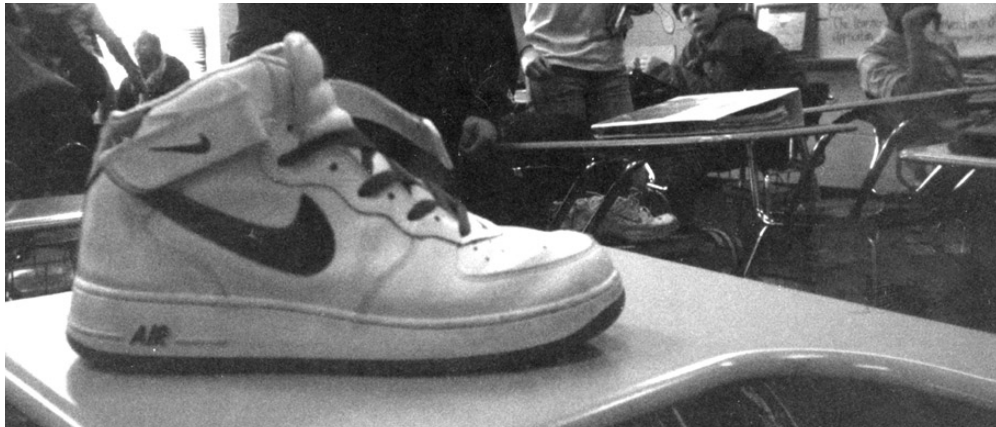
"And then if you are not legal, it does not matter if you have a good education because you cannot work a good job. Even with college."

"But why?"

"Because we are not legal."

"The money is not all in the life."

"It's good to have family."



"I think the most, most important thing is education. All the people need education and the people who have the money they don't maybe have the education but the people who have the education, they have money."

"It might be harder to get a job if you're a girl. Like as a mechanic or something."

"Or working in an office sometime."

"Okay, so can I tell you a story? Because I think it's money. Because we used to have a lot of money and now, we don't. My mom, she got fired, cause she had worked at this company for many years and she got in a fight."

"You mean a fight fight?"

"Uh-huh. With this other woman. She tore her up, too. My mother just got scratched. This woman called my mama a, a, word. A white m-f'er. My mama went on her. And my friend, well it's her friend, too, but my friend's mama tried to pull my mama off but she's skinny and my mama isn't, and my mama, she ain't come off."

"What was the point of that story?"

"I don't know. Money. It's the most important cause we used to have it and now we don't."

"I think it's about race."

"Or being a woman. Fighting."

"Can she get another job?"

"She hadn't yet."

"So maybe it's about education?"

"I'm confused."

Marlenen Alejo-Mojica

was born in Puerto Rico. She enjoys drawing.

She admires her family and herself.



All Kidding Aside: The Final Conversation

"What sticks with you about these conversations?"

"I didn't know they (Latinos) had such a hard time coming into this country. And that people teased them so much."

"The hardest thing is to live along people who don't want me. Don't want Latinos."

"I didn't realize they thought we (white people) were crazy."

"What I think is that everybody not different, that everybody the same."

"We just look different."

"The difference is we are different places but everybody here are humans."

"Everybody has feelings."

"We all have blood."

"We're equal."

"We all don't like feeling like people pick on us or make fun of us."

"She said something about how it's easier to talk with our own race than other races because they understand us better. I think that's right. I think we should learn how to speak more Spanish. Because in elementary school we had Spanish classes."

"It didn't work."

"I think we need a Spanish class in this school. Every middle school and high school. To help us understand more Spanish so we can know what they're talking about. And so we can socialize more."

"Oh, no."

"Because now we (Spanish-speakers) have a big advantage; if we want to talk about you, it's better when you don't understand."

"That's mean!"

"But I don't do that."

"I have a question. Speaking Spanish is so difficult for me. I don't know how they understand English. I mean, English sounds so easy."

"It's hard."

"Wait, wait, if you had a white baby and you put it in a home of a Latino, would that baby speak English or Spanish?"

"Spanish."

"If you teach the baby two language, he know two."

"We need to do that, too. I'm jealous."

"I learned they're really nice. Latinos."

"I used to think they were kind of mean."

"Why?"

"Because the people I was in classes with in elementary school, they were kind of mean."

"I didn't know any of these people in elementary school."

"I learned what they thought about us. It's kind of fun to know. So you can improve yourself."

"What is their opinions; that is good to know. To know the opinions of other people. That we don't know. That is good."

"I learned not to say bad things about other people."

"That it's really disrespectful to talk behind other people's backs. It's like being badly raised."

"This white boy said you were pretty."

"I think I'm starting to pick up a little Spanish. I know what blanco means; that's white, right?"

"I think this is fun. I think it's very socialize-ative."

Recipes

The food we eat defines us in ways that are expressive and particular. For many of us, food is our first introduction to another culture. All the recipes here are home cookin', just maybe not yo mama's.

Home Cookin' or In North Carolina, You're Never Too Far from a Possum or a Pig

How many rednecks does it take to eat a possum?

"What is a possum?"

"It's that animal you see at night in the middle of the road that's ugly and real dumb. They have pink tails and a long nose."

"I don't know this thing."

"They get hit by cars all the time."

"Oh, yeah, now I know."

Let's try that again.

How many rednecks/blacks/Latinos does it take to eat a possum/deer/armadillo?

Three. One to eat it and two to watch for headlights.

"Ewww."

"This isn't a recipe, but my grandma has a souse jar at home. Do you know what souse is?"

"It's like pig lips, and toes, and ears."

"Pigs have lips?!"

Pigs' Feet Souse

Cut off the horny parts of feet and toes, scrape, clean, wash, and singe off any hairs. Put in kettle and boil, then pour off water, add fresh, and boil until the bones will pull out easily. Do not bone, but pack in a stone jar. Sprinkle salt and pepper between each layer and cover with real cider vinegar. To serve, take out however much, put in a hot skillet, add more vinegar, salt and pepper if needed, and boil until thoroughly heated. Stir in flour and water to thicken and boil until flour is cooked. Serve hot as a nice breakfast dish. Or, remove the bones after the first cooking and pack in stone jar as above; slice down cold when wanted for use. Let the liquor in which feet have boiled stand over night; in the morning remove the fat and prepare and preserve for use.

"Oh, here's a funny story about pigs. My grandma came to our house one time from Tennessee and she told me to go out in the yard and pick some pork. And I said, "What?! Grandma, there's no pork in the yard." And she said, "Yes there is; it's growing in the garden." And that night we had POKE salad."

Walter Rayo

was born in Guerrero. He enjoys cockfighting and he admires his grandpa.



Poke Salad

1 to 2 lbs. young poke greens
6 to 8 slices bacon
1 lg. onion
2 eggs

Pick and wash poke, bring to a rapid boil for 20 minutes. Drain and rinse with cold tepid water. Bring to a rapid boil, starting with cold water, for a second boil for 20 minutes. Again drain and rinse with cold tepid water. Now for the third time, starting over cold tepid water bring to a rapid boil for 20 more minutes. Drain and rinse with cold water. Let drain completely.

Meantime fry bacon and save drippings; set aside. Clean and cut onion in quarters. Take drained poke salad. Cook in same pan that you fried your bacon. Add 1/4 cup of drippings and shortening from bacon. Add onion, 1/4 cup of water, salt to taste. Let steam fry until onions are sauteed, about 15 to 20 minutes. Serve and garnish with hard boiled egg and bacon.

“Pork salad – that’s funny.”
“Sounds like something you’d have at a pig-pickin’.”
“What is that?”
“You don’t know what a pig pickin’ is?!”
“Girl, where you from? “
“It’s a dead pig and barbecue sauce.”
“Hey, know why Mexicans don’t barbecue?”
“Is that a joke?”
“Yes.”
“Oh, I know, I know. Because they don’t eat pork.”
“That’s not Mexicans; that’s Muslims, dummy.”
“Oh.”

Pig Pickin’ Recipe

Split open a pig and put it on a cooker – a huge homemade grill -- for hours and hours. Mop the pig with barbecue sauce the whole time. Barbecue sauce is either vinegar or tomato-based and you can get into fights over which is better. When it’s done, go up to the grill and pull off whatever you want.

“What else do you eat at a pig-pickin’?”
“Slaw or greens.”
“I love cabbage. My grandma makes the best cabbage you ever ate.”

The Best Dang Cabbage You Ever Ate

1 T. vegetable oil
bacon grease
a dash of dried red peppers
1 cabbage
water

First fill a pot halfway full of water. Then chop up one whole cabbage (leaving out the core) into some medium pieces. Put ‘em into the pot. Then put some leftover bacon grease, a dash of red peppers, and one tablespoon of vegetable oil. Boil until almost falling apart and enjoy.

“What else?”
“Desserts! Peach Cobbler.”
“Banana pudding.”
“Banana bread!”
“This peach cobbler recipe came from my mother who had got it from her own mother.”

Peach Cobbler

29 oz. canned peaches, drained
5 slices of bread, cut into long lengths (cut off edges)
½ cup sugar
2T flour
1 egg, well-beaten
1 stick of margarine, melted

Mix together and pour over top of bread. Set oven to 350 degrees for 35-45 minutes until browned.

Banana Bread

½ cup butter
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
½ cups sifted flour
1 t. of baking soda
¼ t. of salt
1 cup mashed, ripe bananas
1 cup chopped pecans

Set oven 350 degrees. Mix together the butter, sugar, and eggs. Fold in dry ingredients. Add mashed bananas and nuts. Bake in loaf pan 40-50 minutes.

“What do y’all eat? When you have a big party or barbecue thing? Goats?”

“No. It depends on your culture. Where you’re from.”

“We eat rat.”

“What?”

“With salsa. We eat everything with salsa.”

Salsa

2 tomatoes
1/2 onion
1 clove of garlic
serrano chiles as desired
salt

Toast the tomatoes and peel them. Put the chilis, garlic, and tomatoes in a molcajete and grind everything up. (A molcajete is a rough-surfaced mortar - usually made of volcanic rock - for grinding up spices and vegetables.) Add salt and diced onion.

“Just kidding. We don’t eat rat. We eat mole. Tamales. Posole.”

Posole

The easiest recipe we could find.

1 pound prepared posole corn thoroughly rinsed (buy the prepared kind)
1 medium onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
10 cups water
1/4 teaspoon oregano
1 pound pork or beef roast
1 teaspoon ground comino (cumin)
5 cups water, approximately
3-6 dried red chile pods, rinsed and crumbled
2 tablespoons salt

Place posole and 10 cups water in large stewing pot. Bring mixture to a boil at high heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer posole for 5 hours. Approximately 1 hour before the completion of the simmering time, brown the pork in a large, heavy skillet on medium heat. Add the pork to the stewing pot with 5 cups of water and continue to cook on low heat until tender. Add the remaining ingredients to posole and simmer for an additional 1-2 hours. Adjust seasonings to suit taste.

"But do you cook anything on a big cooker or grill?"

"Chicken legs. Fish."

"I love chicken. My Papa has the best recipe for chicken and dumplings."

Chicken and Dumplings

My great, great grandma, Lida May Meadows, passed this on to her daughter who later passed it onto my Papa, my grandfather. It has been in our family for at least five generations. When my Papa was a young boy, he had to go in the backyard and kill his own chickens. Nowadays he just buys it at the store. I always look forward to that famous chicken and dumplings.

1 (3-3 1/2 pound boiler-fryer)
2 quarts water
1/2 t. salt and pepper
2 c. self-rising flour
1 t. salt
1/3 cup shortening

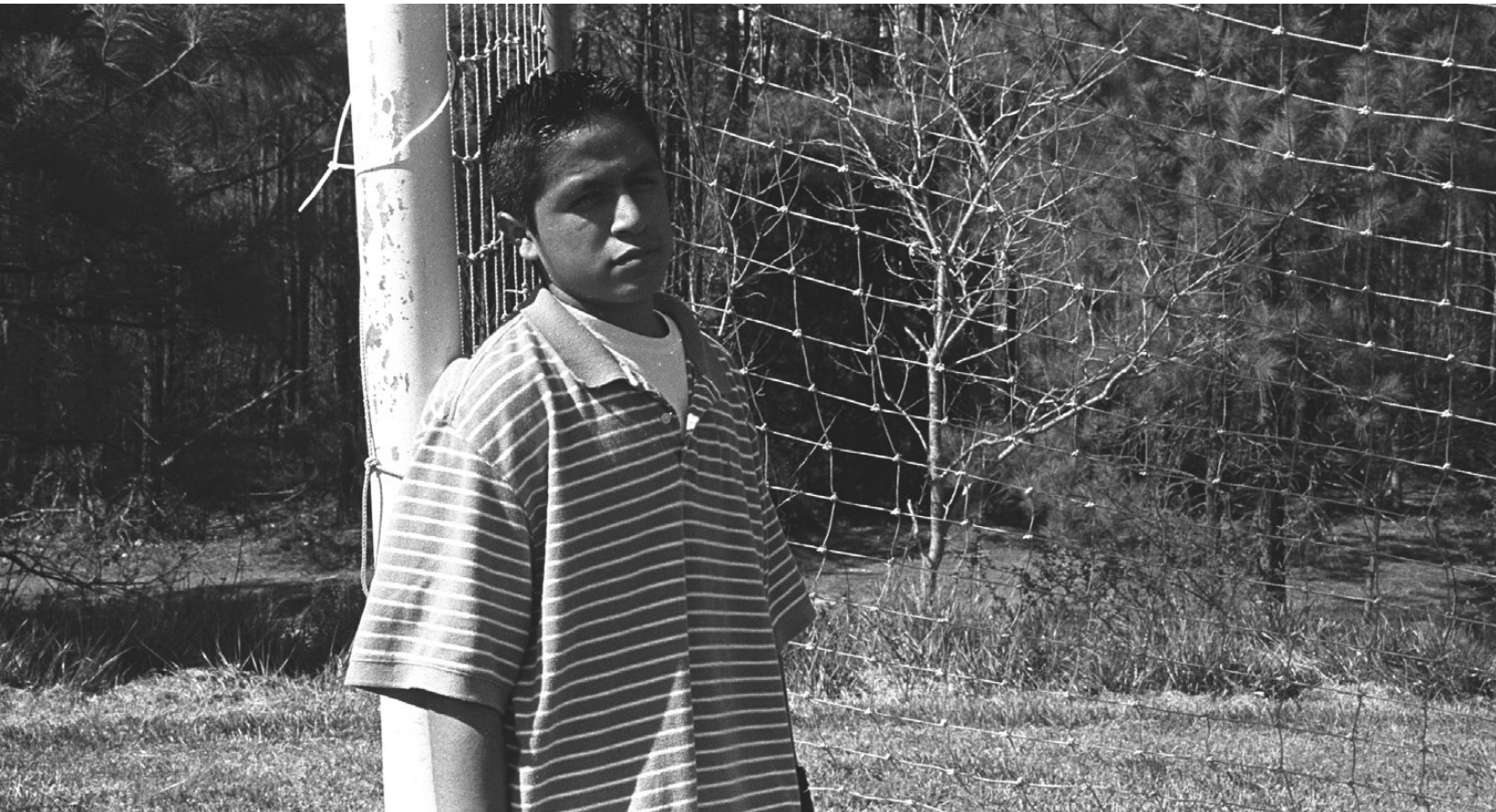
Combine chicken, water, salt, and pepper in Dutch oven. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer one hour or till chicken is tender. Remove chicken and let cool. Skin, bone, and pull apart chicken into chunks and set aside. Reserve 2/3 cup of broth to use in the pastry.

Combine flour and 1 t. salt; cut in shortening with a pastry blender until mixture is crumbly. Add 2/3 cup reserved broth, stirring with a fork just until dry ingredients are moistened. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead lightly 1-2 minutes. Roll dough to 1/8 inch thickness and cut dough into 2-inch squares. Bring broth mixture in Dutch oven to boil; drop dumplings one at a time into boiling broth. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 25-30 minutes.

Post Script

Cockfights

It's on the way to Virginia where you do it.
It's like whites and Mexicans.
There's no girls. And no blacks.
Just men.
And chickens.



Lazaro Saldana

was born in Mexico, D.F. He enjoys playing music and soccer with his friends. He admires himself.

Participants

Marlenen Alejo-Mojica
Bradley Beckham
Erin Davis
Itzel Estrada
Amberr Ferreira
Pablo Guerra
Lindsay Harrison
Anahí Hernandez
Brittany Hicks
Bradley Johnson
Selena Juarez
Erin May
Rose Mora
Walter Rayo
Moises Roa
Lazaro Saldaña
Selene Rivera
Alyx Smith
Olivia Stone

Luis Velasco

Luis Rey Velasco grew up in Tulare California. When he was seven, his father introduced him to photography and as a high school student Luis taught photography to classmates in an after-school program. In college he began photographing the rural structures and migrant farmworker families in the Central San Joaquin Valley in California.

Luis served as an intern with Student Action with Farmworkers in Oxford, NC where he taught farmworker and immigrant children photography. During this time he began to photograph the community of Stovall, NC. A grant from The Environmental Protection Agency returned Luis to North Carolina in 2000 to work on a project to teach children the dangers of pesticides. In 2002, Luis did a presentation in collaboration with the Indivisible Project at the North Carolina Art Museum.

Luis has also documented the American cockfighting community and their families. His most recent work is "Remembering: Hispanic Traditions in North Carolina," a project that documents Hispanic celebrations. Photos of these weddings, birthday parties, quinceañeras, confirmations, and first holy communions will be displayed at the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte, NC.

Luis currently works at the Center for Documentary Studies and is a consultant for Student Action with Farmworkers.

Not Yo Mama's Home Cookin': the Changing Faces of Rural North Carolina

