

**Jasmine's Story**  
(Race and Oral History Project, UCSD)

Narrator: Jasmine Perez

Interviewer: Gabrielle Miner

Transcribed by: Gabrielle Miner

Location: Zoom

Date: 5/29/2022

Length of Interview: 00:29:59

Speaker/ Time	Transcription
GM 0:00:00	"Hi, my name is Gabbey Miner. Today is May 29th, 2022 and I am interviewing Jasmine Perez through zoom for the University of California San Diego Race and Oral History Project. Do you agree to grant the University permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?"
JP 0:00:26	"Yes."
GM 0:00:27	"So, we are going to start with some easy biographical questions, and what are you studying in college?"
JP 0:00:35	"I am studying international business, bachelors of art of international business, with a minor in real estate and development"
GM 0:00:43	"What year of college are you in?"
JP 0:00:45	"I am a senior, so this is my last year."
GM 0:00:48	"How old are you?"
JP 0:00:50	"22."
GM 0:00:51	"22. And then, could you explain for me your family dynamic growing up?"

Speaker/ Time	Transcription
JP 0:00:58	<p>“I come from a low income community and growing up my family dynamic was an interesting one. I grew up with- I am the eldest of 3. I have a family of 5 and my siblings are all 2 years apart. So, I grew up with my parents constantly dealing with financial issues, I think that was the biggest problem I saw from an early age. It put a strain on a lot of the things we did growing up. So, there was a time where I would witness, especially during the Great Recession in 2008, that my parents did go through a hard patch in their relationship and that affected us as kids. So, we kind of had to focus on school and school was our only outlet. And, we were always encouraged to push forward, and failure was never an option. So, seeing my parents were immigrants and they were still doing their best to make ends meet and to have food at the table, shelter over our head, a roof over our head. We just kind of had to push through it and figure things out. It was definitely an interesting dynamic up until I almost got to college. My relationship with my parents did improve and now we are relatively close, and they do support me and have supported me my whole college career. It’s been, I guess, a process (laughs) developing the relationships but it’s been a good one.”</p>
GM 0:02:23	<p>“Okay. How did it feel to have parents who did not go to college growing up?”</p>
JP 0:02:28	<p>“It applied pressure. I definitely feel like being the eldest in my family I was almost expected to just go to college, and do what they couldn’t do because they struggled to just like get to this country. And, now being in this country, they want to see their children thrive and they want to see us, maybe not necessarily become the doctors or the lawyers, but just have a successful future and just having a successful living, everything when it came to work and food, they wanted us to be happy and especially be financially stable. So, it definitely applied pressure. Elementary, I was never really understood the concept of college, I just knew it was school after high school. And then once I got into middle school and high school, that pressure of college, college, college. It was posted everywhere, my parents would constantly ask what are you doing to get there and to meet that goal. That pressure of constantly having to push through was, was interesting.”</p>
GM 0:03:40	<p>“And then, could you describe how it affected your learning experience K-12, directly like academically?”</p>
JP 0:03:49	<p>“When it comes to my learning experience, luckily- well, both good and bad - I am from a very predominantly Hispanic community, so I related to everyone I went to school with. It was almost rare that I didn’t encounter someone who didn’t have immigrant parents or who didn’t face the same struggles back at home. When it came to school, and knowing it was my only outlet, I used that applied pressure to</p>

Speaker/ Time	Transcription
	<p>thrive and to motivate my drive to succeed. As early as I can remember, maybe elementary, I strived for those 100 percents on every math exam. And then, middle school came around, I would take any little critic that I had received during the parent-teacher conferences in elementary like “Oh she’s a very quiet girl, she needs to talk, she needs to do this and that”. That when I came to middle school I realized that I know I am doing good in my academics now I just have to be able to use that to my other advantages and just get involved and bring my community along with me. I did see younger kids, once I got into middle school we had a program where we got to tutor kids. So, I got the chance to be able to tutor those kids and show them that yall [the kids being tutored] should be as motivated as I once was, as I still am, I’m still making it happen. It affected it to an extent, because I know that despite my personal hardships and adversities back at home, I still have to do my best and succeed academically. It motivated my drive up until now, I am a senior in college and I graduate in two weeks.”</p>
<p>GM 0:05:35</p>	<p>“That’s super cool, your after school program.”</p>
<p>JP 0:05:36</p>	<p>“Yeah.” (Smiles)</p>
<p>GM 0:05:38</p>	<p>“Can you explain your college application process with parents who had never attended college or gone through that process before?”</p>
<p>JP 0:05:45</p>	<p>“It was very difficult. I always sometimes wished I could have had an older sibling that could have guided me because being an older sibling myself, I see how much of an advantage my siblings have, um, just me being able to guide them for applying for financial aid and stuff. So, it was, it was extremely hard. My mom would constantly be like “oh this, this, and that”, she was just asking about college. But, it was never ending questions of what is financial aid, what is college, what is a university, what’s the difference between cal states and ucs and private, and how much money do I have to pay. So, just kind of always answering and giving her all the information and being super transparent, and also getting involved myself. In high school I was in several programs. So, my school was very low income so we had Upward Bound (unintelligible phrase) and Avid. All those programs revolved around encouraging individuals, and focused on pushing individuals towards college, and once in college, to an extent support us but also let us go and hopefully you succeed in college, but a lot of people unfortunately will still drop out. Being a part of those programs, occasionally they would have family meetings so I would bring my mom. Um, my dad was kind of always working, so he was not always as present. But, my mom who was try to be more present, she would attend these conferences and meetings, asking questions then</p>

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	<p>I would have to translate, that is a whole 'nother thing. I was always translating everything that was given to me in English and telling her in Spanish, like "Hey, this is what I am doing, this is what I need from you. The taxes." Walking her through everything. It was difficult, but now that she has had experience with me and my sister and now my brother, he is basically set as well."</p>
<p>GM 0:07:43</p>	<p>"Can you describe how being a first generation student affected your college academic learning experience?"</p>
<p>JP 0:07:50</p>	<p>"Being a first-generational student affected my learning experience here in college the moment I entered. As a first year, I dealt with imposter syndrome, a really bad case of imposter syndrome. Where coming to UCSD being a minority, it was really really hard finding my community and find ways that I could stay true to my roots but also succeed, and find resources that would help me in succeeding. I remember my first year I dealt with depression, anxiety, I did eventually seek therapy which helped, but it was hard especially being so close to family. And, at that time having an ill mom, it was really hard. It was just like constantly going back and forth a hundred miles and trying to figure out how to maintain my family and my relationship with my parents and being there for my mom, who was at that time ill, and then still managing my career and my studies and academics. So, with all that and imposter syndrome on top, it was not easy. Trying to make friends, but also being shy, and not knowing how to put myself out there. Eventually, I did join my first org which was Hermanas Unidas, they were able to help me form that community with other Hispanic women and start somewhere. Eventually I grew to join other orgs and expand on that, and find friends and things like that. So, it definitely has been a learning curve from my first year to now being a senior, and I am definitely not the same person I was my first year. But, you live and you learn."</p>
<p>GM 0:09:48</p>	<p>"Do you think high school prepared you for college, like solely high school?"</p>
<p>JP 0:09:53</p>	<p>"No. So, unlike what many people think their high school was probably really equipped, my high school was not. We hardly had APs, we only had I could probably list them on my fingers. Each class had a very low percentage of passing AP scores. So, no I was not prepared at all. When I entered college, I thought I would be fine because I did take all the AP classes I could, I was in honors. But, the workload was not matched, the workload was very different. I struggled and I failed at one point, and I think when I failed my first class that was almost one of my lowest points in college because of the pressure I had all my childhood of I can not fail and it is the end of the world if I do fail. So, the moment I did fail I was like Wow I need to find more resources, I need to go to office hours, I</p>

Speaker/ Time	Transcription
	<p>need to do this, this, and that to be able to just push through because I knew that if I failed my first year, a class, a GE, then how was I going to go through the rest of my three years? I look back at my high school and I look back at my teachers, and they were all super supportive, they were all transparent with “you have to do your work, you have to do this” because no one is going to hold your hand in college. And, said and done no one holds your hand in college. It was easier said than done. I needed to find a study routine, need to find different strategies that are going to help me once I start studying, I need to be more serious about my academics than I was in high school. Because, in high school I feel like I didn’t study, and in college you can’t get away with not studying.”</p>
<p>GM 0:11:50</p>	<p>“And, then how have you had experience in uplifting the first generation community on campus now and in your life in general?”</p>
<p>JP 0:11:58</p>	<p>“Being on campus now I am currently a House Advisor, so very similar to a Resident Assistant, for Muir College. I now work with first generation, first year residents here in my apartments. That has definitely been an interesting experience because I realized that often times, even applying for this position, I was like Oh I am not capable of being that mentor or being able to sit with first years, but then I realized that all my previous positions, I have basically made it my goal to uplift first generation, which is minority communities. One was with Hermanas Unidas, and being that community service coordinator or Women in Business and being the Vice President of Internal Affairs. It was always my goal to foster community and make sure that everyone felt safe and UCSD would become their second home. Because, I know that at first it wasn’t mine but eventually I am glad it became my second home because now that I am an HA it is super rewarding just seeing the faces of everyone learning about different cultures, learning about different people, and discovering who they are. I think that is the biggest take away, I was like wow to see you grow from the first day you came to college on that move-in date to now becoming incoming second years or the second years becoming incoming third years. So, I enjoy seeing that. When it comes to my community overall and people I worked with back home and here, it is still my goal to always uplift and bring others with me. So, once a year I go back to my high school and I am a guest speaker, I give a presentation on what I have done, the summer programs I have been involved in, what I will be doing in the future, how I got there, and I am super transparent if they have any other questions. The high school students, like, Oh what is financial aid, what is scholarships, or this, this, and that. Being able to tell them you should apply for scholarships, it seems like such a pain in high school but now that you are in college it is super helpful. And, constantly telling them Hey don’t give up, no one said it was going to be easy but if I can make it, you can too.”</p>

Speaker/ Time	Transcription
GM 0:14:23	“And then, do you think being a first generation student has changed how you look at how your sister goes to school now, or how I know your brother is enrolled in college now, do you think you have a different perspective on them going to school?”
JP 0:14:38	“Being a first generation has definitely made me happy, it is such a huge accomplishment to even see that my siblings are getting that same chance to go to college. I feel like if it wasn’t for - I don’t want to just say myself - but obviously my parents, if it wasn’t for them supporting my college career, I don’t think it would have been the same for my siblings, like if I would have maybe even attended a community or maybe not gone to school, my siblings would’ve taken after that instead. You know, if Jasmine is doing this then I don’t have to go to college, I don’t have to put myself through that four year university. But, now seeing my sister is here at UCSD alongside me and my brother is soon to be at UC Irvine. It is a really, really good feeling, it is a huge accomplishment, not only for myself but for my whole family.”
GM 0:15:33	“Do you think there is a stigma being first generation in college, even though you are having these great accomplishments of getting enrolled and going to college, do you think there is still a stigma there?”
JP 0:15:45	“Yes. As unfortunate as it is, I feel like. And. I wish there wasn’t a stigma, I wish everyone could see it as a huge accomplishment, and just acknowledge that your parents are immigrants and they came to this country and you are making a change and building that generational wealth, making a name for yourself in this country is insane within itself. So, it is unfortunate to see that a lot of people are like “oh you are first generation, you are not as smart or you are not as capable as these opportunities that may be presented in the future or are presented to you, even college within itself. At the end of the day, you are here whether you are first gen or anyone, you are here alongside everyone else whether they got that additional help, you still made it to the same school, you still made it, you're still attending the same classes, majoring in the same things. You shouldn’t discredit your own previous work experiences and your accomplishments leading up to college. It is unfortunate, the stigma. I hope that one day these first generation students start changing that stigma and creating change in showing that if the people who are privileged that get these opportunities then honestly first generation students should too. Hopefully one day it mitigates the stigma and moves away from the negative connotation of “Oh you are first gen and you are not capable.”

Speaker/ Time	Transcription
GM 0:17:18	"Do you think your feelings evolved concerning the fact that your parents did not attend college as an almost college graduate compared to in high school?"
JP 0:17:31	<p>"Yes. I previously touched upon it with my family dynamic. College was always placed on top of us, like that is the end goal. But then after college, that conversation just disappears of "Oh what are you gonna do?" at least within the family. They know that you have to do something but they almost expect you to know what you are going to do and figure it out. They can still support you from afar but now that you have that diploma you have to figure it out. So, when I was a child, hearing that was like okay but you guys couldn't do that, so why put so much pressure on me? And now, looking back, honestly wasn't until recently knowing that I graduate in two weeks, I started realizing that I don't regret, I would never change where I was born, where I am from, the circumstances I was born in, and the things I went through because it has built who I am now as a person and I have gotten the chance to grow as a leader and reflect on my past and my origins and realizing that "Yeah I might come from this community, I might come from a low-income household and everything but at the end of the day I am making it happen and I am realizing that my parents are getting old". My end goal is to help them retire and get them to retire. And so I do reflect on that a lot and one day I want to be able to retire them and give back and buy them a house. Those feelings were never present when I was in high school and in my childhood. It does come from maturity. It took a long time for me to say that I realize that my parents only had the best interest for us, and only ever had the best interest for me. My feelings have definitely evolved. I don't regret anything I went through as a child, but when it came to constantly moving, even being the new kid because they couldn't afford a house or they couldn't afford an apartment and had to move - or vice versa, they couldn't afford a house so they had to move to an apartment. Even move out of state sometimes because, it was cheaper out of state. It is cheaper living in Arizona rather than California. So, seeing that I don't regret it, it has definitely built character. It encouraged my drive, encouraged my motivation to do the best for myself and do the best for them, that way I can get them out of these communities and hopefully give them a better life one day."</p>
GM 0:20:22	"Can you describe what you will be doing in the future professionally and personally, and if it is connected to being first generation or just your upbringing in general, how is it connected?"
JP 0:20:35	"In a few months, starting in September, I will be working for one of the Big Four companies. As a business major, working with the Big Four it is an accounting firm. I'm not accounting, my focus will be an advisor analyst for a company called Deloitte. It definitely has an overlapping intersection with my upbringing because

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	<p>that trauma drive has driven me to do the best for myself, and a lot of people undercredited and underestimated my ability. So, it was constantly encouraging me to keep going and now knowing that I am going to be going into this big company. It is exciting and it is a huge accomplishment, but at the same time it almost bring guilt because that first generation mindset is like wow I go back home and I see my family and my community and its like okay cool. Almost living a double life where I am one foot in the privileged side and one foot in the oppressed side where it is like, you know (tears up). I see that I have the opportunity to live the life I always envisioned myself living in, but then I think about it and reflect that okay if I am going to be living this life then I also must remember my origins and remember that I one day want to keep giving back and if my parents ever need anything then I will be able to give them that or now seeing that my brother is entering college. Luckily, my sister is set on a scholarship. But now knowing I will have to support my brother, my little brother, to get through college because now that I am out of the household it is one less person so it's more money he has to pay. Financial aid is a very interesting thing, so being able to support that way. They all kind of overlap and they are all a learning experience, but time will tell. When September comes around, hopefully I can start making that big girl money and be able to support my family back home but also just live the life I can."</p>
<p>GM 0:23:01</p>	<p>"Do you think that the survivors guilt you described has ever stopped you from reaching a goal or stopped you from reaching an opportunity you wanted to go out for, do you think it has ever inhibited that?"</p>
<p>JP 0:23:19</p>	<p>"Yes. I feel like to an extent, I almost said no to this opportunity just because of my own friends that I surround myself with are fortunate enough to be able to take that year gap or have the option to go back home and spend time with their family, or take a step back from school and the pressures of life, and knowing that postgrad you kind of have to figure it out. So, I almost, knowing my family is there, knowing my family, the Hispanic the Mexican in all of us is like come back home. It's always just like come back, we miss you. I almost even now this opportunity today, I almost said I'm not gonna apply or if I do apply I am just gonna apply because I know I need to apply, I know I need a job, but I don't think I'll get it. At the end of the day, I know I worked really hard and I know I did my best but I'm probably not going to get it. And, even when this opportunity did present itself, I was like am I ready, you know those questions of doubt: Am I capable of it? Do I deserve it? Was definitely present and was very loud in my mind, I know I am a campus hire and I know that they only hire so many and it is nation wide application process, so even seeing I was one of the people who was hired and now seeing my coworkers, the roster of coworkers and it is only 25 of us. Seeing that I am Latina</p>

Speaker/ Time	Transcription
	and that means representation, that upholds a lot more pressure and knowing that I am now entering and I have to build that community within corporate America. So that is a lot of pressure, but I don't think I should ever and I haven't yet let it stop me so I don't think I am going to let it stop me either."
GM 0:25:23	"Do you have any advice for other first gen students that are facing imposter syndrome and facing that urge to go back home, do you have any advice for them in the future?"
JP 0:25:35	"Yeah so when it comes to knowing or having that urge to go back home, know that your family is always going to be there. Know that luckily with technology nowadays you can call them, you can FaceTime them, you can even Facebook Message them. You know if you don't have that Apple product and you have Samsung, you can always find a way. They are a call away. It isn't easy, it's not going to be easy. It is really important to find that community, and become comfortable with the uncomfortable. The sooner you do that, the easier it gets because the moment you take that first trip by yourself, or go to the grocery store by yourself, it is even life changing sometimes because you realize that that one thing you thought you couldn't do, you just did it. So, if you keep going, it is only going to get easier. So, when it comes to orgs, if you are in college, being by yourself is easy because you are at the comfort of your own home, of your own room, but it shouldn't stop you because there are so many great things out there. And, no matter where you are at, whether you are at a community, a cal state, a UC, anything, there is things you can do and people you can meet and that is the only way you will really discover yourself and I think that is the best advice I can give. Just be comfortable with the uncomfortable, and learn to do it for you and do it for everyone that is cheering you on."
GM 0:27:15	"How has being a first generational student affected your values in general and your way of looking at the world?"
JP 0:27:23	"It's affected them both in a good and bad way. I am definitely more mindful of the little things, the little microaggressions that you might face, and just knowing that not everyone has the same outlook and same viewpoint on certain things, knowing that you might be underestimated and you might be discredited sometimes. But, at the end of the day know that you did it, know that it is your work, stand up for yourself and be your biggest advocate. It's hard, you see the little things but they shouldn't stop you from succeeding. And then in a positive way, I feel like I lead with empathy and can empathize with a lot of people because I have dealt with my own things and now I see that the smaller things I do deal with or smaller issues don't faze me as much. Seeing that I have faced bigger, difficult challenges and I

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	<p>see that in other people when someone needs to talk, I can empathize with them. And, even as a leader, I can read the room and be able to hear everyone out and understand where they are coming from and the different perspectives they have to offer, because I think that is the only way to be the best leader and the best version of myself. Being able to make a change that way and show them that they also matter because some people might not get the chance to feel like their voice is heard.”</p>
GM 0:29:12	“And with that do you have any additional questions or comments before we stop recording?”
JP 0:29:17	“Yes, I just want to thank you for your time. I know that hopefully, anyone and everyone watching this recording gets the chance to be able to resonate with some of the things I said, to know whether you are first gen, a minority, or whether you are a privileged individual, the world is your oyster and you are capable of endless things and you can make a change. And, we are the generation to make this change, so don’t let anyone stop you, don’t let the boomers be haters. Just keep pushing through and you are going to do amazing things.”