



TRANSCRIPCIÓN ORIGINAL DE STUDIO OCHENTA

MIJA ON THE MIKE - HOME

00:17 MIJA

Hi, I'm Mija and this is Mija on the Mike, Solo.

00:21 MIJA

This week I want to talk about home. I have a lot of trouble answering the questions, where are you from?

00:36 MIJA

I'm from Queens, so my passport is American, but I'm still a foreigner here because I'm Latina.

00:42 MIJA

My parents are Colombian, so I'm bloodish Colombian, but not my passport. I moved to France in my 20s, so if you're asking me where I'm literally coming from, I'm probably coming from France if I'm flying anywhere. Where's home?

00:57 MIJA

I live in Paris, but my family lives in Bogota in New York, so home is kind of everywhere. What's your background? I'm Colombian American, but in Colombia, the same American, and in America, they say I'm Latina. Sometimes they say I'm a first-generation Latina daughter of immigrants. In France, though, they say I'm American and I have never once questioned my level of English.

01:18 MIJA

It's funny, these questions are meant to categorize us and help people get who you are, right?

01:27 MIJA

But really, these questions feel awkward and just make for awkward answers.

01:31 MIJA

Here, let me tell you about the very first time I asked mami these questions.

01:42 MIJA

I sit her down very seriously one Saturday morning at the age of six. I tell her to turn down the cartoons on the TV.

01:49 MIJA

My brother complains, but I tell her: "This is serious, mami". She turns off the TV. She's Terrified. I take her hand in mind and I look her right in the eyes and I ask: "Mami, what am I?"

02:09 MIJA

What do you mean, she says?

02:11 MIJA

"What am I? Am I white, Latino, Indigenous, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander? They ask us at school. They don't have an option for Colombian".

02:26 MIJA

And she says: " but you aren't Colombian". And I said: "what?".

02:33 MIJA

"Yes, mami, you're American".

02:36 MIJA

You were born here and I said, yeah, but you are Colombian. Papi is Colombian. So I'm Colombian.

02:47 MIJA

No, she says.

02:52 MIJA

"You're American and if anything, you're Latina because we're Latin Americans and Colombia is in Latin America".

02:59 MIJA

And I say: "that's stupid". And she says: "lenguaje", but I look really sad so she asked me: "Why, why is it stupid?".

03:07 MIJA

Well, it's like this.

03:11 MIJA

My passport is American, but my heart and my blood and my soul and my language is Colombian, so why can't I be Colombian?

03:18 MIJA

And she says: "Sorry, Mija. That's just the way it is."

03:25 MIJA

For months, I was indignant. I was so upset by this information that I protested by writing Colombian next to my name, any chance I got.

03:33 MIJA

The next time I went back to Colombia, I told my grandma. And she said, papers don't matter. What matters is in your heart.

03:48 MIJA

And so I said, my heart is Colombian and so she made me a traditional compassine address that I wore all summer so I could be Colombian.

03:59 MIJA

As an adult, that involved to saying: "I'm Colombian American".

04:03 MIJA

When I talked to my friends, they knew my parents were Colombian, that we listened to Latin music, that we speak Spanish at home and that we threw the best backyard barbecue parties.

04:13 MIJA

After I moved to France, I felt that attachment even more, because here you can only be one thing.

04:19 MIJA

And that's what's on your passport.

04:23 MIJA

I'm American here, period.

04:26 MIJA

Okay, I guess. I won't argue. I'm an immigrant. I've since accepted that I'm a little bit of both.

04:33 MIJA

Colombian American, period.

04:40 MIJA

But then, I went back to Colombia this year. I went back to see my family for the first time in 15 years. And at the immigration line, an officer stopped me in the foreigner queue.

04:54 MIJA

"¿Usted no es Colombiana?" "You are not Colombian?".

05:00 MIJA

And for the very first time in my life, I had to say to an officer of the law, no, I'm not Colombian. I'm American.

05:11 MIJA

And it hurt to say that. I felt a pain in my heart that day.

05:21 MIJA

I guess I should take it as a compliment. It means that no matter what my passport says, I've got a Colombian face. But it's still hurt.

05:31 MIJA

You know, I built Mija story out of these questions in these moments. And a lot of our guests on the show have talked about these questionings.

05:39 MIJA

Maybe there is no real right answer.

05:43 MIJA

It's all blended anyway, right?

05:50 MIJA

All of our parents left their homes and were kind of floaters from different cultures.

05:57 MIJA

How am I saying all this?

05:59 MIJA

Well, one day I will have a daughter and she will ask me the same questions. And I hope that maybe I'll have a better answer for her. I hope that maybe the labels won't mean so much in the future. Maybe Mija in the future will have other things to worry about. But I hope that they will know and understand how hard it was for us to find home.

06:30 MIJA

Thanks for listening. This is Mija on the Mike, a season of reflection on our shared experiences as daughters of immigrants. Over the next couple of weeks, I'll be sharing stories like these and inviting guests to share theirs.

07:00 MIJA

Follow us on Instagram at [@mijapodcast](#) and leave us a note if you like this story.

07:04

Tune in every Wednesday for a new story from Mija.

07:08 MIJA

This is a production of Studio Ochenta, a Latina-owned multilingual podcast studio dedicated to raising voices across cultures. For more from Studio Ochenta, follow us at [@Ochentapodcasts](#) on Instagram. That's Ochenta Podcast with a "s" at the end on Instagram.

07:23 MIJA

And don't forget, this season is also about you. If you have a story you'd like to share, I invite you to reach out on Instagram at [@Mijapodcast](#) and leave us a message with a short story or memory of yours that warms your heart. We'll read it out loud on the show.

07:36 MIJA

Thanks for listening. Ciao.

