

Interview with
CHRISTIAN ANDRES MARIN ROMAN

June 7, 2023

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CHRISTIAN ANDRES MARIN ROMAN

Christian Andres Marin Roman was interviewed by Caitlinn Grimm on June 7, 2023 in St. George, Washington County, Utah. He related his story of coming to and living in St. George.. Eva Sanchez also participated.

CG: Hello, this is Caitlinn Grimm. We're at Utah Tech University Library today. Eva Sanchez is here as the recorder, and we are interviewing Christian — I'm sorry, I forgot your last name in this five seconds.

CM: [Laughter] Marin.

CG: Marin, okay. Thank you. Today is June 7th, 2023. So, Christian, can you please state and spell your full name for us?

CM: Okay, my full name is Christian Andres Marin-Roman.

CG: Can you spell that for us? [Laughter]

CM: Okay, my name is C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N. My middle name is A-N-D-R-E-S. My father's last name, M-A-R-I-N. My mother's last name, R-O-M-A-N.

CG: Thank you. What languages do you speak?

CM: Spanish.

CG: Spanish, okay. And where were you born?

CM: I'm born in Colombia. The middle, medium city called Bucaramanga, almost up north.

CG: Okay. We're going to switch to the more open-ended questions now. So can you tell us about your childhood and family?

CM: Well, generally speaking was a normal childhood. A little bit of challenge sometimes. I grew up with my dad, my mom, and my younger sister. I don't have more brother, sisters, not that I know. Just, yeah, sometimes we have a lot of challenge in my life and my childhood, because my dad have some alcohol problems. But, generally speaking, was a normal childhood. My family was a regular family.

CG: Can you tell me about school?

CM: School, it's interesting because in Colombia, the buildings are not separate categories like here. Like middle school have the one building, the intermediate have another building, high school have another facility. No, in Colombia, all those grades is in one place.

Primary, or elementary, and secondary is the only division. So I attend the public school. It was good, sometimes a little bit rough environment. My school was a vocational school, yeah vocational. And yeah, I have to learn some skills in electricity, or electronics, something like that.

CG: Was there anything about school that you enjoyed, or disliked?

CM: Definitely, is, just begin secondary is a good time. I really enjoyed everything. Playing volleyball for my school was one of my best memories. And play soccer, the tournaments in the school, that was my memories, best memories. Something that maybe I disliked is because we were many students, and the cafeteria was very small. So it's not always, we can get the food.

CG: Was the food good, though?

CM: Generally speaking, yes. [Laughter]

CG: Can you please describe some of your favorite religious or cultural traditions you grew up with?

CM: As a Latino people, we have too many, yeah.

CG: [Laughter].

CM: I guess the most common in Colombia, is religion and a holiday at the same time, is Christmas. Christmas and New Year play a big role for the Latino people. Christmas is a time for share, it's a time for being with family, open presents, you know, share food. The New Year is a big deal, like that. Without criticizing, it's not that quiet like here. It's very important, because it's the time when you make the resolution for the next year. Even going to the gym, but it's a time that people enjoy to evaluate their life. Even sometimes people buy new clothes for the new year, like have many superstitions. As a Latino people, we are so superstitious. One of the things that we enjoyed is like some tradition that people have for the new year, in order to bring good luck. For example, one of the most popular is go around the block with a sweepback, with a bag and some clothes inside the bag. That means this is, supposedly is going to bring you the opportunity to trip more. You put some clothes in the bag and go around the block, that is going to bring you opportunities. Or maybe, there's more that I don't — for bringing money, this is one of those. But that's the most common. There are more traditions like the Holy Week, that we explain. But that is very religious people focus for one week more in a spiritual life. But, for me, maybe Christmas, and Happy New Year, the new year, happiness.

CG: Okay, did you have any like festivals or something you attended, or participated in other than Christmas and New Year?

- CM: Colombia have a lot of carnival and festivals. There are two, but the big ones in Colombia, one is called Carnaval de Barranquilla. Barranquilla is a city up north. It's a very full of color carnival. But mostly, I feel more attracted for the one who is in the southwest, I guess, called El Carnaval de Blancos y Negros, the Black and White Carnival. And when the white people paint their face black, and Black people paint their face white. Yeah, it is the way to invite to the community and keep away the racists, or tough, racist model. And that is mostly the main idea of that carnival. Of course, during the carnival, there are more activities. But just summarize that is the main purpose of that carnival.
- CG: Thank you. What brought you to the St. George area?
- CM: I go to the English program, English as a Second Language program here. Yeah, technically, that was, in that moment, that was the cheapest option. So that's what brought me here. ... There's a good friend who was in Colombia. He told me about, before he went to Colombia, he was taking classes here. He told me about the university, not expensive university. The program could be fit for me and my pockets. So that's how I discovered St. George.
- CG: Okay. Have your religious or cultural traditions changed since coming here?
- CM: Maybe. Religious, no. But maybe some cultural customs that we have, yes. For example, the most common is, for the Latino people, it's very common to greet each other, friends, with a kiss on the cheek. This is not very acceptable at the beginning here. But no religious, kind of the same for me.
- CG: Have you stopped doing anything, other than the greeting?
- CM: Hugs. [Laughter] Yeah, I don't know, unfortunately, I feel people like, too much, is touching people, is hugging people, is kissing people. We don't have too much the concept of personal space. And, but it's something that I have to, between decrease and stop it.
- CG: Has the way you celebrate like Christmas and New Year's stayed largely the same, or have you changed that?
- CM: Definitely, that has changed. Because for example, in Colombia, you have to be awake until midnight. Because if you don't do it, Santa is not going to bring you presents, the Christmas presents. Here, you need to go to sleep in order that Santa comes with the presents, and open and, next day, early in the morning. Colombia, you need to be awake until midnight. Technically, the dinner, actually we celebrate 24th.
- CG: Okay.
- CM: And here, it's kind of 25th, that we celebrate kind of. And in the new year, we start 31st, and finish the celebration the next day, January 1st. So, the dinner for those days is a big

deal. It's a special dinner, not common, or regular dinner, have to be a special dinner. The dress for those days has to be special.

CG: You have a special food you make for those dinners then, like regularly?

CM: That's very [???German???] food, but it's not easy to prepare. There are many, the only one that I remember that I am able to cook is called "ensalada papa," potato salad, or "ensalada rusa," Russian salad. This is the only, the one. But the other is called, something "muchacho relleno." I don't know how to translate that in English. Full boys?

ES: A whole gentleman or something?

CM: [Laughter] Sounds like that, yes. But it's like, meat, and you put vegetables and some fruit, and you are rolling, rolling, rolling, rolling. And then you tie and bake. This is the summary, because if I tell you, step by step, how to cook that, it's going to take long, yeah. It's good. Also some called "natilla," it's kind of like a flan, but more simple. What else? It depend on region in Colombia also that you have. In the center, it's more common, tamales. Up north, it's, by the coast because Colombia have the both, have entries for both ocean, Atlantic and Pacific. So the food for Christmas can change.

CG: Thank you. Will you tell me about your work?

CM: My work here, okay. Yes, I work for BioLife, which is a biolab, plasma center services. It's a plasma donor center. I'm a technician, and kind of a phlebotomist. We call each other technicians. My job is, just take care of the donors. They go there, connect to, stick them in the vein, connecting to the machine, who is in charge of, extract the blood, separate the plasma from the blood, take back the blood to the donor, and keep the plasma. That is the summary.

CG: Right, have you done anything else here, or in Colombia?

CM: Oh yeah. You're asking about my experience working? Oh no, yeah. Because for example, when I get here, I was working in the, I was this washer in the cafeteria, because of my visa. My student visa just allowed me to work on campus. Then I went to work in custodial. Then, while I was working here, as a custodial, I was working in the Mexican restaurant, peeling potatoes, cutting onions, cleaning mushrooms and shrimps, something like that. In Colombia, I work in many things. But my work before came here, was the human resources assistant office, and the hospital for a year, kind of. Then before that, I work in the company who helped for recruiting and selecting people for working banks. Many of my, at the time, I was visiting people in their homes, doing verification of the information, something like that.

CG: So what has been your experience with the broader St. George community?

CM: In general, even though the city has been growing up a lot, we are still kind of a small city. So small cities doesn't bring too much problems. It has been easy to interact with the

community. I am volunteering in one of the radio stations here in Utah Tech. Utah Tech have two frequency and one DJ, 100.3 FM. I volunteer, sometimes I invite people from the community to talk about the specific topic, so that's the way I interact. Yeah, also when I was working here as a custodial, this is the open campus, many times the university organize some activities for the community. We have to work with the university in order to host the people who come to this campus.

CG: It's interesting about the radio; what kind of things do you talk about?

CM: Many things. Mostly, I usually use the social media to check what is trending, and discuss about that. The last time, I invite a couple. We were talking about, it was, they considered feministas.

ES: Feminist?

CM: Feminist activists. So I invite them to talk about, what is that, what this is about, where is the purpose of their being feminist activists, what are the benefits, what is the risk. And we worked in discussing about the events that has happened. For example, sometimes as a roleplay, sometimes I play the role to be a hater, or something like that. I am very neutral on those topics, just trying to be a character during my show. So we talk about this incident with the student, college swimmer, a woman who compete against a trans man, or trans woman, I don't know what is the, right. Even though they get tied, he received the trophy. So I was, with those girls, we talk about that topic. So what is happening, why is that happening. So something like that. Sometimes simple topics. Like one, coincidentally, a month ago, we were talking about comparing dating life in South America, the dating life in America. Something simple like that.

ES: I have a question. Do you do your radio show in English or Spanish?

CM: Spanish.

ES: Okay, I was wondering. That's really cool.

CM: Yeah, always welcome.

CG: That leads us into our next question. So what are your thoughts on the Latino-Hispanic community in St. George?

CM: It's small still, because this is a small city. But it's growing up. Always, the Latino community brings something. For example, something new to the people. For example, the other day, I found out a guy from Colombia, I didn't meet him before. In Colombia, it's very common, something called "ensalada de frutas," the fruit salad. And actually, it's one of the most plate, famous menus when you're dating in Colombia. I didn't know, and he's selling those. I was so happy to buy the ensalada de frutas. Because of course, bring me many memories. Remind me the flavors of my country. Always, that happened with the different countries. They bring something close to you. One of the things that I

miss from Colombia, and the other Latino countries that I had this, is the street food. Whoa, this is a big deal. [Laughter] It is the community, of course, the Latino community has been trying to, mostly for food trucks, because it's more related with love, right? But I have a neighbor who sometimes on weekends sells pupusas. So this is from El Salvador, or Honduras, I guess. So it's super cool to know something, to taste something, for other countries without going that country, right? I have a good friend, she was my classmate from Brazil. Sometimes she sells bread, very famous bread called "pão de queijo," cheese bread, I guess, will be the translation. It's good to have something from Brazil, without going to Brazil. I guess, in general speaking, that is one of the biggest experience of opportunities that the Latino community here in this city brings, or provides to the city.

CG: How would you describe your relationship with the white Americans here?

CM: Generally speaking, it's well. Just sometimes, because I am kind of a dinosaur, I need to learn a little bit more of the new generations. But generally speaking, has been a great experience. My wife is American, so has been good.

CG: Have you experienced any racist or prejudiced behavior here?

CM: No, not direct with me. I have seen in others, but not with me, fortunately.

CG: What types of things have you seen?

CM: Stereotypes.

CG: Stereotypes?

CM: Yeah. The other day, I was in the Mormon Visitor Center. There were a sister missionary from Colombia. We were talking about, what part of Colombia you are? She's from the north; I was from the center. We start to talk, when some kind of ol' lady came right to her, and say, if she's from Colombia, for sure, she pay her mission selling drugs, so she doesn't deserve to be there. So yeah, old white American lady. Unfortunately, drugs is a whole history, as a Colombian people we have had, and we will have. But yeah, this old lady start to talk in that way to, to the girl. So assuming, because she's from Colombia, her parents pay for her mission selling drugs.

CG: Thank you for sharing that. Would you like some more water?

CM: Okay.

CG: So, how has the area changed since you've been here?

CM: The area?

CG: Yeah, like the St. George area?

CM: A lot, because I get here kind of ten years ago. Ten years ago, it was a small city, right. Now, wow. I can see many constructions. I know the people who is listening to this conversation is not going to understand, but those house in that hills didn't exist when I got here, right [pointing to Middleton/Foremaster Ridge]? Washington Fields didn't exist, the way how it exists right now. Ledges, I guess is the name, the new neighborhood. When you go to the River Road, you get to Popeyes and turn left by Summit [Athletic Club]. The neighborhood on the hill.

ES: The Ledges?

CM: The Ledges. That didn't exist. So the city has been changed a lot, has been growing up. That's the best part, because I am a food person, because I like to try new restaurants. If you have any suggestions, welcome. Has bring new options, but we still need more options for this city.

CG: Have you noticed changes within the Latino-Hispanic community here?

CM: Of course, if the city grow up, brings more opportunities, and it brings many things, and more Latino people is coming. So, of course, the community people have been growing up. At the point that we have, okay, I don't know in the past, but ten years ago, we didn't have the Latino radio station. Today we have it, because the community has been growing up, and has been, many things.

CG: Do you have any questions?

ES: I did, I had a couple of questions. I know you mentioned you were at the LDS [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] Visitor Center, or the Mormon Visitor Center.

CM: Yes.

ES: Are you Mormon?

CM: Mostly.

ES: Were you Mormon before you came to St. George?

CM: Yes. That's why my, when she asked me, religious have change coming here, no.

ES: And were there any countries that you feel have similar food to what you know in Colombia?

CM: Maybe Ecuador, Venezuela, and Peru have some similarities, something. For example, Venezuela have the arepas, which is something similar than pupusas, but not the same. Colombia have, too. Ecuador have something called "chanchito hornado," or pork bake. We have something called "lechona" which curiously, the country who has the same recipe is Philippines and Polynesians. They grab, not a big pig, just medium pig, and they

open it and take out everything, and fill it with rice, veggies, and many things, and just bake it. We do that. We have that. Peru have many seafood plates. And north of Colombia is very seafood region. So if we say the same, not really. But very close.

ES: Did you also ever watch American television or listen to American music when you were growing up?

CM: When I was in Colombia?

ES: Yes.

CM: Yes, yes. I listened, I didn't understand anything. Sometimes that brought me some inconvenience when I get here, thinking something looks, sounds cool, but we don't know what is the meaning. Yes, I remember, the most common American TV shows that I remember were, for me was the *Call of Duty*, about Vietnam War, but in Spanish, it's *Mision del Deber*. The other ones, who was very, my favorites, *Los Años Maravillosos*, *The Wonder Years*. And then, there was, that is how many people in Colombia know the Dallas Cowboys football team exists, is because they have the reality show about how, the process they recruit and select their team cheerleaders to make the team. And the TV show is named, *Making the Team*. This is most common.

ES: Did American television ever affect your perception of the U.S.? And then when you got here, did that change a lot?

CM: In some ways, yes. Some ways, yes, because when you don't have the point of comparison, you assume that, what are you seeing, what are you watching is real, right? For example, when you go to see those movies about the university life, the crazy life, you are expecting to see something crazy like that. [Laughter] No, at least not here.

ES: That was my little question, that I was wondering about.

CG: If there's nothing else that you feel you need to tell us, we have one more question for you.

CM: No, go ahead.

CG: Okay, so what would you like people to know about yourself or your community?

CM: My community is like other communities. Just human beings with qualities, mistakes. Just, but at the same time, different. That I say, we don't have the concept of the personal space, not because we want to disrespect others, no. Just because we are many affections. We express that. That is why the Latino men have the fame to be flirty, so, totally true. [Laughter] Sometimes we are troublemakers, but always we want to serve. Always we want to share something. As a Latino people, always the first thing that we want to share is food. So if a Latino guy invites you to go to eat something, fifty percent is flirtation, fifty percent is just Latino reasons. This is the point with us. [Laughter] Food plays a big

role in our life. We ask forgiveness with food. We celebrate anything with food. A bachelor party, a divorce. [Laughter] Yeah, with food. The way to make friends is with food, right? And we give flowers just because. In Colombia, to give roses is not a romantic thing. So don't worry, the Colombian guy give you roses.

CG: Did you have an alternative that would be romantic then, flowers?

CM: Oh yeah. Okay, I will need to use your, because I don't know, yes, I want to show you the picture of the flower, and you say the name in English, okay? Okay.

CG: Sunflowers.

CM: Sunflowers. Very expensive! But if you give that to the girl, for sure she's going to say yes. [Laughter]

CG: Those look like a type of lily?

CM: No really, we call "cartuchos."¹

ES: Is it an orchid?

CM: Not really. Being honest, I don't know the name. And roses, but depends on the color. Because sometimes we say, the fairy says that if I give you red roses, I am expressing love. But if you die, I am going to put red roses on your casket. [Laughter] So roses is more the color. White, yellow, those more.

CG: Okay, is there anything else about the community, or yourself you'd like the world to know?

CM: No. No, I'm a very simple person. [Laughter] And too much simple, I'm very predictable, so. [Laughter]

CG: Okay, then we'll stop the recording.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]

¹ Calla lilies