

Ada: (Music plays) *¡Hola hola! ¿Adivinen qué?* Guess what! We are back with a little minisode! We missed you all, and maybe you missed us? And so we wanted to reach out and tell you about some of the things that we have been up to. As, you know, the Center for Participatory Change put out the first season of *Se Ve Se Escucha*, there are seven episodes, check them out if you haven't already. And right after we put out the last episode we moved to another project, which is *Serpent's Tongue*. *Serpent's Tongue* was a four-week Spanish class for native Spanish speakers. It was a class for Latinx folks interested in reclaiming Spanish fluency, literacy, and grammar in a healing space. So, to organize *Serpent's Tongue* we recruited a professor from the University of North Carolina here at Asheville, Juan Sánchez Martínez, and Juan is in the studio here with me today! *Hola, Juan.*

Juan: *¡Hola!* (Laughs)

Ada: Eh, I wanna ask you, uhm, why you wanted to participate in this project.

Juan: Well, I wanted to participate in this project because I believe in the beauty of languages. I also believe in... in the richness of migrations and, eh... being in between many cultures and traditions.

Ada: And what did the class mean to you? Like, after we were done with the four classes, what did it mean to you?

Juan: Yeah, but... I never felt that it was like... directing, or, you know, like teaching, necessarily. I just, you know, when we used to sit down and think about the—the activities, I was just learning from you, and from—when—when the workshop was happening, I was learning from the—from the participants, and it was always beautiful to learn about, you know, like, really... intimate stories about other experiences with the language that I grew up with, so it's, uhm... I just felt honored to be part of it so that's what it was for me, yeah.

Ada: I really appreciated you being, uhm, kind of part of this because, uhm, you had such a gentle hand with us, and I think that you were really sensitive to the folks coming into the room, had a lot of shame, had some fear, had some nervousness... and I think that you just did such a wonderful job meeting us where we were at and kind of helping—guiding us along, and I think that you could really feel that and everyone really appreciated it, so I want to say thank you.

Juan: Thank YOU, thank you all.

Ada: We also invited some of the folks who participated in *Serpent's Tongue* to join us, *entonces*... Elizabet is here in the studio. Elizabet, will you tell me what *Serpent's Tongue* meant to you, what the class meant to you?

Elizabet: What *Serpent's Tongue* meant to me was... a lot of gratitude towards, uhm, Ada and Juan. It meant a lot to me to have—to be able to have this space, yes, because for a long time I wasn't able to have the proper, like, education behind, you know, writing Spanish

grammatically correct. And that meant a lot to me, and I was really grateful to have been given this opportunity.

Ada: And Juan made us write, and he kept telling us that in order to read and write in Spanish we were going to have to read and write in Spanish, and at the end we all kind of, like, had a *crónica*, or a part of our lives, and I wanted to ask if you would be willing to share some of your *crónica* with us.

Elizabet: It starts, “If I spoke to you in Spanish, you may ask me, ‘Where are you from? I don’t recognize your accent.’ You won’t recognize my accent because for many years I hid my voice. I hid my voice for lack of confidence, for the machismo that lives in the words of my uncles. I hid my voice at school: the frustration of listening, ‘What did you say? I didn’t understand you. Your accent is so strong.’ That made me want to get better in English and put aside my Spanish. My voice was shut down every time someone said ‘You have to integrate yourself more into the culture from here.’”

Ada: Thank you *Chapis* for participating in the class and thank you for being here. *Entonces* now we are joined by Dulce Mirian Porras, hola Mirian. Mirian, what did participating in Serpent’s Tongue mean to you?

Mirian: It meant, for me... uhm, a new way of not just learning the language but to embrace community. I think, uh, it has been long for me before I felt I was not just learning something just to accumulate knowledge, but also to appreciate humanity in, uhm, just other beings being there for a specific love for this language.

Ada: What was your favorite part of the class?

Mirian: My favorite part of the class was the *dichos*. (Ada: hm-hmm) Uh, I think for me is really important, uh... and it was really like, a huge part of my life, um, living in Mexico, like the *dichos*, because they have, like, a different meanings, like, and you can play with the words in—in.... I mean I laughed, and I learned, and I have a lot of things that I have been through with my grandmother and my mom, learning those, where I can just remember, uh, them and embrace them, even my grandmother that is not anymore alive.

Ada: *Gracias*. So we have back on the podcast Monse Ramirez, and I was going to ask you, Monse, if you would share your poem.

Monse: Yeah, thank you for having me back. My poem is called “Mi español.” “Mi español is my Spanish. My Spanish is the songs in my grandmother singing me to sleep. It’s my mother sad laugh stepping on your land. My Spanish translates into English, it crosses borders and travels thousands of kilometers. My Spanish tastes like fruit I’ve tasted before: familiar, but I can’t remember its name. My Spanish is gay, queer, strange. It decolonizes, finds, and makes new paths. My Spanish kisses my lovers’ lips, conjuring love spells under new moons. My Mexican tongue drinks from the rivers of queer liberation. My Spanish is magic, it flirts with others. My Spanish tries out, creates, and confuses words. It dreams. It listens to the ancestral sounds of the earth. My Spanish asks ‘how do you say that?’ It gets tongue-tied. My tongue tries to catch up with what my heart wants to

say. My Spanish is bad-ass like my mother, stubborn like my father. It's the voice of my ancestors remembering, telling stories of dreams and magic. It's bare feet and warm rain. My Spanish is a deep breath in. It smells like queer liberation and revolution."

Ada: Alan, will you tell me what participating in Serpent's Tongue meant to you?

Alan: To me, participating in Serpent's Tongue was a way to learn in a non-academic setting, um, to reach back into my brain and, um, reclaim my minor, which was in Spanish during college, and instead go about it in a whole new direction. So, I was really excited to be a part of Serpent's Tongue. I felt like I was gonna get what I needed, that I didn't get in my college, in my university, so... and I really did

Ada: And what's your relationship, like, how would you describe your relationship with English and with Spanish?

Alan: My relationship is pretty... is pretty contradicted, I feel like. I was raised only speaking Spanish, and as I grew up I was the one who had to learn English for my family. And then I was raised teaching my father English, and now we only speak English in the house. So... growing up as a kid I only spoke Spanish and that's how people knew me, and now I... as I try to relearn and use it and be fluent in both languages, I... kind of surprise people that—that I have both languages now, that I'm not too American or too assimilated to understand what's going on, to understand the— both cultures of myself.

Ada: And will you share some of what you wrote, uhm, in the class?

Alan: "I've always had insecurities with my languages—identities—*y la iglesia*. I was raised in spaces without representation of me for most of my life. That anxiety tires a person, and that anxiety robs my energy, but the goal to live beyond and create a future mine has always been clear. I don't know where I gained these skills of adaption from, or why I gained the nightmares of my ancestors. I understand where on my body I have a scar but I don't remember when I fell, only that is natural. And everything that I have carried on my back will keep me going forward."

Ada: Thank you to everybody who came today to talk to us about their experience with Serpent's Tongue, thank you to everybody who participated, uhm, and stay tuned, because we might have one more minisode before the end of the year. On behalf of the Center for Participatory Change, I'm Ada Volkmer...

Leonel: Leonel Gutiérrez of GBD Productions...

Ada: Music by Combo Chimbita. Thanks for listening! (Music plays)