

Being Brown: Mexican Stories of Struggle, Pride and Culture
 Dr. Valerie M. Mendoza

Our lives and the lives of our family members are extraordinary! We may think that we live in a “typical” family, but once we ask questions and show a genuine curiosity we inevitably learn exactly how amazing our family members are. In this talk Valerie Mendoza shares unique stories of her seemingly ordinary family—name changes, curanderas, a 40-year-old tradition and NASA are involved. These lived experiences show how her family members have been trailblazers, culture bearers and firsts. She will also give suggestions about how you can learn stories about your family’s unique histories and stories.

Tips for gathering stories from your family members

FORMAL	INFORMAL	BOTH
Decide who you want to interview and ask them	Any time works: in the car, at a meal	LISTEN and try not to interrupt
Prepare: set up a time, think of a topic and write up a list of questions to give in advance	Be inquisitive and show genuine interest: “how did you and grandma meet?”	Take photos of the storyteller
Ask your storyteller to bring an object of importance such as a photo to help with the conversation/job memories	Pick a topic you’re curious about. Oftentimes stories are shared when asked.	Make note of the date of the conversation
Record the conversation; your phone works just fine		Ask for specifics, “how are we related to him/her?”
End with “is there anything else you would like to tell me that we didn’t discuss?”		Ask open-ended questions rather than yes or no ones
Allow for breaks if need be		With permission, share your conversation with other family members
If using the interview for research or a specific purpose, explain to the storyteller and have a waiver for them to sign.		Always give the option not to answer the question.
		Always thank the storyteller for sharing