

“Charla de Merienda,” or “Snack Talks”

By David Tamez, Editor-in-Chief and Co-Founder of Lawrence Talks, a Podcast Series

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Hello! My name is David Tamez, philosophy graduate student at the University of Kansas and founder and director of Lawrence Talks, Inc. Lawrence Talks is an organization that is committed to not just connecting the University to the Lawrence community, but also being a space for underheard voices. We have two podcast series, lead in-person public conversations, and provide online space for thoughtful arguments about the world we live in.

My founding of Lawrence Talks was inspired by my love of stories—a passion which started early. As a young Latino, I remember hearing the stories of all the sacrifices my grandparents made to come to America and set the foundations for a new life with their children. Like me, many other Latinx scholars and community members have stories about their family’s immigration experience, their efforts to maintain their culture while becoming part of a new one, that have shaped the way they work and think. To give these voices a space and platform to be heard, Lawrence Talks has partnered with KU’S Center for Latin and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) to create the Charla de Merienda series.

In English, Charla de Merienda translates to “snack talks.” An experience that I and many Latinx people have had is having late night talks over religion, politics, philosophy, and mysticism drinking café and eating pan dulce. I particularly remember having conversations with my grandmother about the supernatural over a late-night cup of cocoa. As a philosopher and skeptic, I tend to believe that experiences of the supernatural can be explained away. But I have always enjoyed when my Suegros share their stories of supernatural experiences. These stories are more than horror stories, they are someone’s retelling of an experience they believe they have had. The goosebumps and dread you get are real. Grandmothers walking through the hallway, smelling their cigarette smoke when no one is around, and the occasional dream to top it off. Que piensas yerno, she would ask. Often times, I’d still be processing the information. How could I challenge such a raw experience? I just loved and appreciated being at the table and hearing their stories, but later, I realized these “snack talks” had helped me to understand that there is more than one way to see the world, that not everyone’s version of “truth” is the same, and that some cultures interpret “reality” differently than others.

With the Charlas, we have sought to explore the shared experiences of minorities in the Americas not as a way of downplaying one for the other, but rather, to demonstrate a greater emphasis on the importance of how different perspectives are a strength not a weakness, and that by working together the injustices of the world can more thoroughly be addressed. Much of the reason why people do not get involved is either because they lack knowledge of injustices, or because they have failed to grasp the reality of its impact on those around them.

Further, these are not discussions just for the academic or the researcher of a top tier program. These are discussions for your friends, parents, family, and anyone else who has not yet grasped the persistence of injustice here and abroad.

Through a series of podcasts and in-person events, the Charla's have explored topics like land rights of the indigenous, police brutality, and the shared turn to authoritarianism in both the North and South Americas. For an idea of how these conversations have gone, check out our first episode over the topic Machismo, where our speakers discuss how toxic masculinity has been experienced in Latin American communities.

We hope that you will join in these discussions and support them by listening and engaging on lawrencetalks.org, iTunes, or Spotify.

Again, my name David Tamez, and I thank you for listening. Muchas Gracias

This transcript of "Charla de Merienda," or "Snack Talks" is part of the Humanities Kansas Humanities Hotline, a series of bite-sized micropresentations about Kansas stories – both serious and light-hearted – that are researched and presented by experts across the state. Humanities Hotline topics change monthly. For more information about Humanities Kansas and the Humanities Hotline, visit humanitieskansas.org or call 1-888-416-2018.