

The Mic Drop, Season Three, Episode Three: LGBTQ+ life in Latin America (English Translation)

Larry I'm there. My name is Larry Achampong and welcome to The Mic Drop. The Mic Drop is a collaborative podcast with the sole purpose of creating a space for migrants by migrants, exercising an agency in exchange for a shared space of collective thinking, storytelling and debate. It is created for a long-term collaboration between members of many hands one heart and myself, supported by heart of glass.

Britney Hello everyone welcome to this new episode of The Mic Drop, I'm Arthur Britney on this side and I got a really special guest here, but to all the audience this is going to be a very special episode because we are switching to Spanish.

Britney So we're going to open the window now, and we're going to let the Latino Gangs, the Motomamis, the Bichotas Takes the Stage, And I'm here with my beloved Friend. She is, my dear friend Jared From Guatemala, Say hi to the audience Jared.

Jared Hi there is!

Britney But don't be shy we are here in gossip, between motomamis, motomamis.

Jared We are usually shy in public I am outrageous everywhere.

Britney In private we are, who we are ay no!

Britney We are turning out spicy later, but now we are going to start talking about what is this episode about. I got here Jared, because he's from Guatemala. Everyone here knows I came from El Salvador and Guatemala and El Salvador they are next to each others.

Jared We are cousins, we are cousins.

Britney We are from the same ethnic. El Salvador and Guatemala they are next to each other and we share many cultural things, maybe not in the roots, because Guatemala has more culture, like Maya, but they are similar in religion and all that affects our lives as LGBT in our countries. So, this episode is focused on how we were gay in the darkness of our countries, because we already said this before, El Salvador and Guatemala are very homophobic countries, there is a lot of discrimination, persecution and the life of an LGBT person is in danger in these countries, but we manage to get places when we could be ourselves, tiny places, very underground actually, and I'm going to start, maybe I should start talking about my country and a place called La Disca, the record Scape, and it was a basement, literally a basement. We had to get down many stairs to access this basement and we used to meet there, and it was like obusly a club, but LGBT only, and the area it wasn't very safe around. but it was the only place that for years. And for many years it was the only LGBT place when people could be themselves. Do you remember your first experience in an LGBT club?

Jared My first experience in a club. I guess it was a little bit illegal because, I shouldn't be there. I was 17 years old and in Guatemala Well, things have changes but we used to have a card which was our form to get and ID and it was like a kind of booklet.

Britney Yes, typically made of cardboard card board.

Jared So I remember I used to have some friends that they were older than me, One was 2, the other one 26 and I was 17 and they told me to go clubbing. I didn't have the age to have an ID yet, and I don't know how they found one, they asked me for a picture and they paste my picture over the other person one, and with that they tried to make me get in, of the security guard he was gay, and he had many years to work there, he wasn't a fool and he got the ID it was fake, he figure out the age didn't match, I guess the age of the person in the ID it was 50 or so. But I was like that.

Britney But did you manage to get in?

Jared Yes, that is the interesting part, he called the club's owner, they are a very influent person in Guatemala, They name is Tamara y and they were very problematic, They were like They were arrecha.

Jared They were linked to cloudy business in Guatemala and that's why they were allowed to have a gay club, because they got many...

Britney Links.

Jared links In high and down grounds, So it was strange they came out to speak with someone and yet they came out, they came out, looked at me and asked me my real age?

Jared I said 17. Do you really want to get in? Is that big your desire that you faked an ID to get in? I said yes and they allow me to get in but If the police came they said they know nothing. so they advice me that they would not help and they allow me to get in, and that was my first time.

Britney She!!.

Jared From the beginning . Talking with the Bigs.

Jared Like a spy? obviously. Oh no, that's terrible. but mine it was a little bit more chill. And actually it was more like a plan, like a ritual. When I went for the first time to la disca. the one I told you, the disca it was for many years the main club in El Salvador, but around 2010, 2011 They opened a new one Budha, Shiva Mantra, Shiva Mantra and they got like a themed Buddhist decoration all around, and at that moment it felt like the LGBT community splited in two. Buddha or Shiva Mantra they were for people with money, so the high class and then the disca it was for the people. So you could find like two different eviroments. I moved in both, because depending on how I felt, that sometimes on the record, I mean, you could go and twerk and dance and feel exquisite and it was like I could get to the floor and no problem. But on the other hand sometimes like in Shiva the people that arrived, the picky people, the pussy people we say, fresas and it was perhaps a different environment. Yes, I remember that my best friend planned it, that this is another story that we are going to tell later. But my best friend, he knew that I had never been to a gay club or anything, and he told me No Artura, and I will take you to a nightclub, you go with me, you dress nicely and we went, because I dressed, I always dress very badly in life. until now I'm half a tranny I dressed myself nicely.

Jared I think we all went through that time, I don't think anyone turned to see me when I was 17 and 20 years old and say oh, how good, what a good sense of fashion I had. I think it happens later in life.

Britney Yes, but I dressed badly, 30 years of my life.

Jared Ok, you took a little longer than the rest.

Britney I mean. I dressed very badly, 30 years of my life and so far I dress a little decent, but hey, that's another topic. The point is that it was funny because since I didn't have clothes to go to the club, my friend told me to save money and we're going to go shopping one day and we went downtown. I went to choose a shirt, pants and shoes for me to go to, that is decent and because we are going to the club.

Jared You're supposed to be with people with money?

Britney Exactly, then if it went like a beggar.

Jared They wouldn't let you in, that's just one thing they said before, right? If you weren't dressed according to the place you wanted to enter, they wouldn't let you.

Britney And then they wouldn't let me in. That's why sometimes I liked going to the other club, La Disca, because there you could go the way you wanted. So this one I remember that the first time I went and I still think I have the photo somewhere, I'm going to look for it so that we can put it on Instagram or something. I think it's on my facebook that I remember that I was wearing a red but divine shirt and I even ironed my hair.

Jared You were already wearing long hair?

Britney it was still short

Jared Okay.

Britney Why? I don't know, but it was a very interesting question and it was there. This is going to sound kind of weird, but there it was. I think the first time I felt LGBT, because before I had been like with my friends, but in a closed place in houses I had already had sexual experiences with boys. But when you enter to a club, that's it, when you go in and see the dance floor and you see people dancing and you see boys kissing and you say.

Jared Where was this? Where is that feeling of loneliness that you have maintained until a moment ago? It finally falls, you find for a moment a place to belong. I understand that. Which is what I felt when I came in.

Britney Yes, yes, because that's how I tell you, I remember. I came in and saw some boys kissing and I said Holy Jesus! , I love this, here I am and I belong here, I'll stay here.

Jared You belong there!

Britney And well, but as anecdote, random anecdote, A guy never asked me to dance on the club. The good thing is that the club that we were going to at that time was still very fashionable, Britney and Madonna and all that. I was going to the club, I was going to dance all the choreographies of Britney and I was going to do the show for you, and maybe I wouldn't find there who to dance with or with whom, we say Topar to kiss, but I was going to enjoy the show.

Jared Topar is to kiss that means topar, to kiss.

Britney Topar. It's like when you kiss like that passionately, I don't know how they'll tell you in Guatemala.

Jared I don't think we have a word for that.

Britney No, but topar is that.

Jared There has to be. There has to be but right now I don't remember a word kneading. No, I'm going to socar someone. That's a passionate kiss of tongue and saliva. Saliva goes well.

Britney That touching, that nasty thing.

Jared That you end up with each other's food in your mouth.

Britney So yummy. Yes!

Jared Socar, there is that I put a socada on him, right now I remembered.

Britney Yes, a socada. Well, that's a topada in El Salvador. And if I remember that my best friend was always going to hook up because my best friend and I we have a thing. If you see my best friend, a lot of people for a long time in our our friendship relationship, a lot of people always wondered And why are you best friends? Because we are really the opposite, but the opposite. And in fact I'm going to send this podcast to Chepe, my best friend. Regards. Chepe love you. Chepe hated me when we met in the U and had a class together. He he had given me the nickname Barney. Well because I was big and fat and I always had a smile. He used to say here comes Barney, I don't like Barney, that I don't like them, but I didn't even know that he existed and then life brought us together in the theater group and the theater group we began to get to know each other more and more and in the end well. I have a friendship with him that I don't even know how to describe it, but it's just that it's a feeling of fraternal love from my best friend. I really feel sorry for him because we forged it for many years. And why? Why is he telling you this? Well, because when he went to the club I always saw him hooking up with guys, that I was there forever alone, I was just going to be, I was just going to do this one, it was just going to be the show, because I always did a show and it made me laugh that there were times when even the owner of theclub already knew who I was and when I arrived he would put me first in karaoke so that I sing and gave me my place. So yes, it was a very, very nice experience these years of disca. Then I became old.

Jared It's curious that you mention that phenomenon that you said existed in your country, that there was a nightclub that was for people with money and there was another that was for people with fewer resources. Maybe that's something that also happened in Guatemala and the nightclub I had mentioned was called Genetic and it was quite iconic because well, when I was 17 years old I started going to this nightclub, but as I understand it, since my dad was a teenager it already existed and it was a gay nightclub, only it had another name it seems that in the 80s they called it Big Ben, that was the name she had and it was more underground than I knew it, it was well known that the cops arrived almost weekly, every weekend they would get in, beat and take out or ask for money from the nightclub owner Tamara so that.

Britney Chale.

Jared In order not to take people away or not to close them or not, they did not implant drugs or something to close the nightclubs, a very difficult thing and there was also another nightclub that was the opposite of the one called Mirash, well that it is a nightclub there was very little, very little time, because then at the time when the nightclubs around the city, which weren't many, that closed for some reason, but the ones that were doing the competition were Mirash and I had friends who didn't set foot in Genetic and others who didn't set foot in Mirash, that was very curious.

Britney Well classist,.

Jared But something that happened was that those at the time didn't, there was no Uber or anything like that. When people went out to the club, they had to take a taxi, taxi and that was the next fear, because you didn't know if the taxi driver was going to hit you, he was going to jump. I never told my parents when, when he is in Guatemala, because it was a one-hour sermon for which they would let me out, I would have told them, but on the way back it could be that the taxi driver beat me, assaulted me, never let me leave the house, but what many people do was that they were doing worse, even in that was bad. The people who left Mirash and took taxis and the taxi drivers who were outside the nightclub waiting were terrified because they were always assaulted. People preferred to walk because we are about three or four blocks apart, walk, Mirash to Genetic, etc. Take the taxi because it was the possibility that they would not be assaulted or beaten, it was a little smaller, so I recommended it. It was better to walk to a place completely far from there so that the taxi drivers would not know that I was leaving a nightclub, so that they could not have to take any danger.

Britney Yes, Chale. The truth is that I was very lucky because I became friends with a taxi driver. Ahre, we had this Don Ricardo, he was the trusted taxi driver. And he, that is, him. There is a phrase that says among ghosts we are not going to step on eachothers sheets. So don Ricardo.

Jared Had I never heard that?

Britney Yes, among ghosts, we are not going to step on eachothers sheets, just as among sinners we're going to throw the rope around our necks. But don Ricardo, he knew that not everyone wanted to work with LGBT people, he had a car, a very detonated, but very detonated car. That car that you say I don't know how it walks, but it was the only one he, to which there were really a couple of gentlemen there, but it was the only one I traveled with, because he was always going to take us to the door of my best friend's house, because there we stayed to sleep, because I lived in a town over there. Then he said no, but I prefer to take care of my clients and to be recommended to others to discriminate against them.

Jared If because there are people who take advantage of a situation in a positive way, as well as in a negative way, because they said well, here gays are being threatened, beaten or whatever, then I am going to give them a good service so that they come only with me. One thing that happened in Guatemala did well, I don't know if it happens in El Salvador, it was apart from beating and assaulting you, also taxi drivers, there were a lot of kids when nightclubs went out. Today I'm going to look for a taxi driver who is handsome because. Because then it happened that the taxi driver would stop in a dark place and tell them , do you want to get home? He was getting off zipper and you have to give me oral so that I can take you and don't get assaulted or something. They put them to do oral. It said I'm

leaving with a handsome taxi driver like that. If you touch that for me, at least it won't disgust me. That didn't happen there in El Salvador?

Britney Well, the truth is that anyway, maybe so, I don't rule out the possibility and I don't rule out the possibility, honestly, because but as I told you, I only traveled with that taxi driver, so I preferred not to take risks.

Britney It was even.

Jared A risk.

Britney Even I remember that several times we saw that Don Ricardo was putting people in the car and we told him how long it will take? He said in half an hour I'm going to leave him and come back. And we stayed there on the sidewalk, at the club, waiting for him to come back to leave. So it was something that yes, that is, we wouldn't leave if it wasn't with him, but what you say is very interesting, because it's beautiful but dangerous to be LGBT in Latin America and as you say, this feeling, this feeling of liberation. When you enter a club and forget everything, you forget that your parents sometimes don't love you, that they don't accept you, you forget that you've been bullied at school, you forget that they shout things at you on the street. Okay, and it's like that's that crash when you go out and realize that your life is still in danger.

Jared If I to give you an idea, whoever is listening, I am 34 years old. I had my adolescence in 2003, four, five or six, I don't remember around anymore. I remember when I was in school and in high school and I had already formed my head the idea that if I was gay I wouldn't accept me. So I still wanted to change, I wanted to stop being gay, but I already knew I was gay. The first feeling that came to me is one of loneliness, because you look and look around and you never see someone who is that you think is going to be like you. You can't see that there are more people. And back then I remember that the internet was something new and searching is not like now I go into Google from my phone and look for what it is to be gay or what it is to be pansexual, or what is to be non-binary, right? That is, that information no longer existed and generally the information that existed were articles against you.

Jared Homosexuality was always, always was something and a lot. The articles were against that, so it was seen from a bad point of view, so that fueled even more the feeling of loneliness that you gave yourself. When someone told me look, there is a gay nightclub, I didn't believe there was something like that in Guatemala. No, it can't be that when I entered the club the first time and saw, I went in and in the dark there were all the men dancing together to the music that. And something he gave me. I think that was what I noticed the most, the lack of fear and fear among all those who were inside the nightclub. It was as if inside that place it was safe. And you also looked at gay people everywhere and I said well, that's fine here, no one is judging you, for once no one is doing you wrong, you can do whatever you want. It was something incredible because. For the first time I had felt that I wasn't the only gay man in Guatemala. And that feeling is never, ever to me. It was never taken away from me. That's why I think the gay community may accuse them a lot of party people. They accuse us a lot of being brazen that he has an uncontrolled life. But what people sometimes fail to see is that the world we live in as LGBT people is not a heterosexual world. You go out on the street and go to a McDonalds restaurant and you're in a heterosexual world, that is, everyone, everything is there. It may not be so, but it's all done. from the box we tent to consider that everyone is heterosexual. You go to the bank, you go to school, you go to college, it's a heterosexual world. So that feeling of belonging

that heterosexuals always and constantly have is something that you have been deprived of. So there's that feeling of constantly wanting to stop feeling that and fill that space. And the only way to miss back then that. That everything was like very careful. The only way to do that was to go to a nightclub. The only way to meet more gay people was to be in a nightclub with gay people. So I feel that point has been lost, but it's one of the reasons why people in the community have stayed close. It has stayed together through parties because it was the first place where someone or gay people generally had their first encounter with more people than that's what they considered.

Britney totally and. And if in the end, as you say, we unfortunately live in a world built for heterosexual men rather than heterosexual people than heterosexual women they.

Jared Also.

Britney They have their drawbacks.

Jared Its disadvantages.

Britney But we live in a world where, especially in Latin America, the system is built for heterosexual people. In El Salvador there is a lot going on now on social networks, because people already think about it a little, twice before business, because there is bad publicity, but before it happened a lot than you. For example, when I was in El Salvador, I never had a date with a partner that we were going to a restaurant or something like that, because it was very common to hear them kick you out. Exactly. Then I did. Effeminate, more female and what does she explain? Woman yes, motomami, always, always motomami, never immotomami. I was afraid to go and my partner was also afraid to go with me and be thrown out even if we didn't do anything. They didn't even make you want to touch his hand, or hug him or anything out of fear of being pulled out.

Jared Something as simple as holding hands was a fear.

Britney Exactly and that's horrible to think. To this day I have never walked hand in hand with my partner on the street and I am 30 years old.

Jared You were conditioned.

Jared That's what I think of me, I was conditioned to be afraid of that.

Britney That and that I haven't had a partner. But I see the point again.

Jared That is also another problem.

Britney That other problem. But the point is and with this, perhaps to conclude something you said, I think it's a very nice reflection, which is the fact that we as an LGBT community don't have. Well, especially in Latin America, because we don't have spaces to be free, because we don't have a space to live our lives or be who we want, we build those spaces and these spaces are filled with parties, they are filled with magic, they are filled with color because everyone wants to be themselves there. And as you say, I, for example, may have never been to the street, to a restaurant with a partner, nor to the disco, but I did see, for example, my best friend going to the club with his boyfriend. With us we went to the disco. And it's that feeling that they could feel safe to be a couple. So it's very unfortunate that we wanted to close this episode, because out of so many anecdotes we've told,

sometimes you'd like to close this episode by saying things are getting better in Latin America, but they don't too.

Britney And they get even worse every day. Guatemala approved an anti-LGBT law and a gag law, we say in El Salvador, when it is very censorship. El Salvador in the president is openly homophobic and wants to reform the Constitution also to prohibit homosexuality, solely because of populism, to win over the conservative sectors and give him re-election. And of course, in the end what makes me sick the most is that politicians do it simply and simply to stay in power, because in the end they neither affect nor interest them. They simply want to override a community that is very violated over their rights, because the majority of the population doesn't care. And unfortunately that's why Jared and I are here with you in this country, because we can't be free in our countries. Our lives are in danger and it is always important to remember that the things that are granted in England, they are no granted to everyone around the world, So we close with that message. This is The Mic Drop, I'm Arthur Britney Joestar with Jared thank you so much for listening to us

Larry My name is Larry Achiampong, and thank you for listening to The Mic Drop. If you like to listen to previous episodes of the series or to tune in for more episodes coming forward, please check out www.heartofglass.org.uk. Additionally The Mic Drop can also be found at anchor.fm