

## Neco Interview Tornabe Honduras

BJ: Can you just start by telling me what your name is? And maybe spell it?

N: My real name?

BJ: Yeah your name.

N: I don't like to give out my real name man.

BJ: Ok so your nickname?

N:  $\sqrt{\text{eco}}$ , they call me  $\sqrt{\text{eco}}$

BJ:  $\sqrt{\pm\text{eco}}$  ok.

N: Yes, since birth.

BJ: Is that  $\sqrt{\pm\text{-e-c-o}}$ ?

N Yeah.

BJ: Ok and were you born here in Honduras?

N: Yeah, I was born down here.

BJ: And when did you move to the States?

N: '95

BJ: In '95?

N: Yes

BJ: How old were you then?

N: Like 8, no like 6 or 7.

BJ: 6 or 7 years old? So you basically grew up in New York?

N: right.

BJ: Do you remember moving to New York?

N: Yes I remember

BJ: You remember... was it hard?

N: At first, yes.

BJ: Why?

N: Cuz, I didn't know speak no English. They used to pick on me. It was different, it was a different environment.

BJ: Who picked on you?

N: The kids of my neighborhood.

BJ: Uh-huh, why

N: Cuz I didn't know speak no English. The way I dressed. The way I talk, the way I act. I wasn't like them, I was a whole different person.

BJ: Yeah.

N: Comin' from a whole different country

BJ: Um,

Ben: Hang on

BJ: Oh, battery.

Ben: Ok

BJ: We heard stories that uh some Garifuna that that go to the states, they don't really fit with blacks and they don't really fit with Latinos because they're, the blacks look at at language and culture and the Latinos look at race and and skin color. Did you notice any of that?

N: Yeah, I noticed the differences. Everybody stick to they own kind, basically

BJ: Uh-huh. So what was your own kind there?

N: When I first got there I used to hang out with my Honduran people, but after that when I got a little older, my neighbor is a lot of American kids. Puerto Rican. So I started hanging with them.

BJ: Uh-huh, so mostly with Latinos?

N: No, with the blacks kids.

BJ: Black kids?

N: Cause I felt like I fit in more with them.

BJ: Why?

N; I was growin' up, I just like the things they do. Going to school, I like nice things. Like the way they dress. Basically I was caught up in the negativity.

BJ: Yeah

N: Cause the Honduran people don't really get into trouble like that. They go there to work so I caught up in the negativity. The good thing didn't catch my eyes, the negative thing did. That's what happened.

BJ: Ok, and so you fit more with the black people than with the Latinos?

N: Right.

BJ; Was there a lot of conflict between the black people and the Latinos?

N: Sometimes. Sometimes. It's a racial thing, sometimes, not all the time.

BJ: Why is that?

N: Probably they think they better than one another.

BJ; Uh-huh, uh huh. So um did you happen to fit in with a particular gang?

N: Yeah, I was part of a gang over there, I-ain't-gonna-lie.

BJ: Which one?

N: I was a blood

BJ: Uh-huh. And how was that life?

N: That life is rough man. Being part of a gang is rough. It's rough, real rough. I got locked up for it. Did things for it. And look where it got me at. Back home.

BJ: Uh-huh. They sent you home?

N: Yes

BJ: Why?

N: Because I hit somebody with a pistol. I didn't shoot him, but I hit him.

BJ: Yeah, yeah. So they deported you?

N: Right. I did six years and then they deported me.

BJ; Yeah.

N: Back here.

BJ: Why did you decide to get into the bloods?

N: Cause that was the only thing that was in my neighborhood. Either you fit in, or they gonna pick on you. It was fit in issue. Which you got to school, you see these black kids running around. Like I told you, the negativity caught my eye and not the positive thing. I started hanging with them. They got the woman, the girls, nice cars, clothes. Fast money. Being that I left from here... I was young when I left from here so I didn't know no better.

BJ: Um, and and why is all those things important to young kids? The money, the girls, the cars? Why is that important to kids?

N: That's a good question. Anybody want to live a good life man. Anybody doin' a... but at the same time you can live a good life by workin' hard. If you work hard.. you go... gonna get a good life. But we did like fast money, nice stuff. We want it like this. But that don't last.

BJ: Uh huh, yeah. It seems like one of the things that attracts people to the gangs is that they they feel like they're their brothers.

N: Right.

BJ: That they're going to stick together, that they're going to family, they're going to fight the fight against the people that want to to be better than them. Um, describe that a little.

N: Like a lot of people choose the gang... like they come from a broken home or you ain't gonna talk to your father the same way you talk to your brother in the streets. They show you love, they do anything for you. Supposedly, but at the end they don't end up like that. That's how they paint the picture at the first. That they ready to do anything for you. But at the end... they show you love. Anything you want, they give it to you. Go party. You just like the fun part of it. But the negative part jump in.

BJ: Describe the negative part.

N: The negative part is you getting shot. You going to jail. Or you making your mom suffer. You getting yourself into trouble. Things like that. Like me, I suffer cuz I went to jail. Messin' with them. I did six years of my life. That's the negative part of it.

BJ: yeah. Um, we heard stories about some people coming back from the States and bringing the gangs with them. and starting to get kids here to act like that. Do you know about that?

N: It's out here. It's out here right now. And it's affecting the community. Me, I don't agree with it being out here. Cuz you can't... it's not the same. It's not the same. The gang... the bloods or the crips or the Latin King, the Nietas. It ain't gonna be the same out here. Cuz that was made for the State only. And it's getting worse. You kids ten, eleven, nine, saying that they bloods, saying that they crips. It gonna get worse. If we don't stop, it gonna get worse... It gonna get worse. It's all here, it's all here. It's a lot of American kids or the ones that get deported like me that will bring it out here to the neighborhood. To the town, to the village, whatever you want to call it. And that's corruptin' our people man.

BJ: What are some of the problems that have happened because it was brought here?

N: They fightin' each other you can't wear certain colors. That destroying the community, if you do that, they tourists ain't gonna want to come in here. So they be fightin', you know. Things like that. Fights for now. That's how the problems start.

BJ: We noticed earlier that certain kids that come from the States they walk different, they talk different, they... can you describe that?

N: See the difference between us and the kids from the States that we... Somos mas humilde. They haven't suffered. They suffer in the way as, oh, they go to jail, they in the ghetto. But like over here people work hard. Over here you you suffer a lot. You suffer a lot man. In the States you got the government giving you food. Give you food stamp. The government help you... over here you ain't get none of that. If you don't work hard for your own money or to survive, you gonna be done. So we grow up in poverty out in here. Over there they don't really grow up in poverty. You get Jordans. You dress nice, your mom gonna make sure you look good. Over here, ain't none of that goin' on over here. Expensive out here.

BJ: It seems like it makes kids there feel like they're entitled to having things, whereas the people here realize they gotta work for it.

N: Right, we appreciate things more. We appreciate things more.

BJ: Ok. Um, I had a question and I forgot what it was. Do you have one quickly?

Ben: Yeah, I'm curious um... if you could go back to the States, would you?

N: Yes, I would go back... I went back. Cause they deported me to... the first time. I got deported in two thousand and eight. And that same year I was here for like two months, I went back. I made it. Went back to the same thing, running the streets again. I got caught up again. They gave me two years and I just came back like seven months ago. Yes, I want to go back because I'm not used to being out here. The lifestyle's different. Everything man, the environment, the everything's different. I would go back.

BJ: How did you get back? The first time?

N: I went through Mexico, to Guatemala, Mexico, old train, i went in the train. Once I got to the border, I paid somebody to cross me over. And I made it.

Ben: I understand why you would want to go back but if you went back would you fall into the same stuff you've already been in?

N: Nah, nah.

Ben: Why not?

N: Cause I'm tired man, I'm tired of getting into trouble, I'm tired going to jail. Cuz this time I go back, I get caught. They gonna give me a lot of time. I just want to chill, I just want to be with my family. Relax man, work. Cause I work I can do a lot of things over there. If I'm up there. If I'm down here I could do it too, but it gonna take a long long time. It's a slow process.

BJ: What is it about the life here that you're not used to?

N: I don't like the environment, I don't like the the way all over here they gossip too much. I don't like they ways man. They ways, I don't like they ways. I just don't like it man. The States it's more easy up there. Like I said, you gotta work hard here, real hard if you don't got nobody helpin you, you gotta work hard. Hard, real hard. In the States you don't really got to work that hard.

BJ: Um, do you watch TV?

N: Sometimes, but not like that. Because the channels over here is not the same like up there.

BJ: What do you like to watch up there?

N: (laughs) Like to watch BET, you now entertainment stuff. Entertainment stuff.

BJ: Yeah, can you think of something else?

Ben: Um, I want to know... you kind of had a hard life. What eight years in jail?

N: Six. Altogether like nine altogether. Cause I went to DF Juvenile. I did a year, came out, did six, came out, did two now I'm here now.

Ben: So...

N: That's cause, hanging with the wrong people, the American kids, cause they rough. Like I told you all before, us Hondurans they don't really get into trouble. Especially when we go from here, a little older. Cause we know it's hard over here, so we go there, we go to work, we wanna work. Cause when you go from here at such a young age, you gonna adapt to the way they live.

BJ: I'd like to ask you what your heritage means to you.

N: Me. To me, it mean a lot to me. It mean a lot. Cause I know our people struggle for us. Back in the days. And but the way things going right now, with that, we losin' it a little bit man. I don't want it like that. I don't want it like that.

BJ: How do you stop it?

N: By teachin' the young... young childrens about what our people went through, the history of Honduras, of our people where we came from. Like that. Talkin' our language, a lot of mothers talkin' Spanish to these kids. And Spanish not out official language. Garifuna is. So now they, people growing up, kids growing up speaking Spanish. They don't even speak Garifuna no more. Cause that's our fault, the parent's fault, the older crowd's fault.

BJ: Do you speak Garifuna?

N: yeah. That's one thing, I wouldn't know I ain't forget. I ain't forget.

BJ: Did you speak Garifuna when you were living the bad lifestyle when you were in the U.S.?

N: With my friends?

BJ: Yeah

N: Nah, only in my house.

BJ: Only in your house? Ok, so your parents made and effort to speak in the house?

N: Right right That's the only reason I ain't forget.

BJ: If you were talkin... how would you describe what a Garifuna was to your friends in the bloods? Did you ever have to describe what a Garifuna was?

N: Yeah man, that's a good question cause I used to think, I used to think sometimes we're both. Like like I said, one side, they don't get into trouble, they like they dress nice, but they work hard for they money. They didn't want to party, go to school, have a good time. But with the bloods, we gonna have, we gonna dress nice, we gonna have fun, but also gonna go rob people, look for trouble, go fight the gangs, things like that. So it was obviously more peaceful, my Garifuna people. It's all about talkin back home. Oh such has guy-hey or how such and such doing. That the positive side. The negative side is the side of commitin crimes...

BJ: Violence.

N: Violence. right. The Garifuna people's more calm.

BJ: So how did you tell one of the blood members the the bad side? Did you ever have a conversation where they asked you what a Garifuna was and you have to explain to them what it is?

N: No, they never asked me. They usually just make jokes. Call us guala-guala or go back to your country you... they used to make fun of us. Cause they mad cause we not acting like them. Cause we gonna fit in, we gonna act like some of these people, they gonna try to make, they gonna feel like they doing the right thing, you doing the wrong thing. And my Garifuna people. It not the, they not like blacks. They don't like they ways. Like my father, he don't allow me to bring black people to my house. Cause they made a rule, they disrespectful. Cause us Garifuna, we respectful, but the black kids, they not respectful. They gonna go to open your fridge. They gonna do mad noise in your house. They gonna smoke weed in your house. Us Garifuna parents, they don't allow that. They more strict. When it comes to certain thins.

BJ: So if were to meet somebody like me maybe that didn't know anything Garifuna. How would you tell me, explain what a Garifuna is? How would you do it.

N: Good question. What a Garifuna is...

BJ: There are a lot of people in the U.S. that don't know anything about Garifuna, don't know they exist. You have a chance now to explain to them what a Garifuna is.

N: Garifuna is a is a culture man. It's a culture. It's a language. It's the way we live. That's what Garifuna is, it's a culture. That's what Garifuna is.

BJ: And so, what specific things the way you live are Garifuna only?

N: They way we eat, the way we work. The way we do things. The way people, females they give birth. Like the way we do things, it come back from Africa. We still doing things they used to do back in the days back in Africa. We still got it in us. That's what Garifuna is.

BJ: LIke what?

N: Like, damn. Like cookin'. The way we cook.

BJ: How is it different, the way you cook than in the States?

N: The States, they don't really cook out there. They only cook macaroni and cheese, McDonald's, pizza, over here you cook. We eat machuca, tapado, rice and beans. Good food, fish, fresh off the sea. Chicken. You know, we we eat better than the states. We see over here a lot of people in the states they fat, they sick. You see that we healthy over here. Everything's natural. See I go pick up a mango right now. Eat it. You can't do that in the States. You gotta buy it and they put mad stuff in it. Vitamins. Coconuts, look.

BJ: It seems like in the states the black kids and the black, some black kids hate whites. And here the Garifuna have been oppressed and there've been racism here against the Garifuna here, but they don't necessarily hate the people of another race here. Why is it different?

N: Cuz, over there. They sort of got knowledge of what happened back in the days. Over here a lot of people's more closed-minded cause they don't read. They just they just worried about work and work and they don't read they don't know history about nothin. Which over in the State, they know the history of what happened so called back in the days, the white suppressing us, you know slaves. So they still feeling some type a wear about that. Which over here, they don't care over here. If you treat 'em nice, they gonna treat you nice.

BJ: Which way is better?

N: Over here. If you treat me nice, Cuz every people... white people ain't bad, they ain't racist. That's that's a stereotype if you think every white people is racist. They're not. So you treat people accordingly. They treat you.

BJ: but you knew people in your gangs that didn't feel that way right?

N: Yeah, a lot. A lot. Minority of them.

BJ: Describe how they felt.

N: They feel like they hate white people man. Cause they, especially in jail, white people is mean in jail. They mean man, they do some horrible things. So most of them come home with that, especially back in the days. What when they was slaves, probably they great great grandparents was slaves. They had to suffer. And there's still slavery going on the states believe it or not. But they do it in a higher term now, they don't do it openly. They do it locking us up. yeah, you're supposed to lock us up if we do something bad. You know, but the jobs, they give

us messed up jobs. The cop want to harass us. You could just be walking and they just. The way you dress. Oh, he got a baggy pants. He got tattoos, he in the gang. He a murderer, come here. They gonna bring you in and check you. So they hold a, they feel the same type of way about that.

BJ: Or if you're driving a car and there's the police with a radar gun...

N: In the fancy car with rims...

BJ: And they see a black person they want to stop them whether or not they did anything wrong.

N: That they a drug dealer.

BJ: Yeah. Anything else?

Ben: Um, I wanted to ask cause it sounds like you're not super happy here in Honduras.

N: Nah, I'm not happy here.

Ben: It's not the life that you were living in the U.S., but at the same time you recognize that in a lot ways it's better here, so I guess what's the draw to the United States?

N: What drove me over there?

Ben: Well, what, why would you want to live there as opposed to here where life is simpler, it's slower.

N: You're right. I think cuz I'm used to it more. I'm used to it probably, easy things. Over here, it ain't easy over here. Ain't nothing easy in the States either but it's a little easier, it's a little better than down here. Me I grew up there, I'm used to being up there. I don't like it over here. I like it because you free. You don't gotta worry about police. You go to the beach anytime you want. You walk around with slippers. Anything. You free you can walk around... you free over here. I think my problem is just cause I haven't give Honduras a chance. I'm stuck over here, all day, every day. I think I got to get out, do things more, you know get to know my country a little more. Cause my country got a lot to offer too. You gonna make it anywhere. The states not the only place you can make it. You can make it anywhere so I think if I do get out start traveling, going all over Honduras, I think I'm gonna like it.

BJ: What do you do here for, to earn a living?

N: Well, that's a good question. Right now I can't work over here because I got tattoos, they think you a gang member. MS-thirteen, eighteen. So they ain't give me no job right now so my family be taking care of me from the states. My family take care of me. I could work, that's the... I could work over here, but I'm not used to doing the things they do.



BJ: Like what?

N: Cuttin' grass with machetes. I'm not used to that. Go and selling coconuts, I'm not used to that. Go sell bread, I'm not used to that. Go fish, I'm not used to that. A lot of stuff I'm not used to. But if I had grow up here, I would adapt to it, but being that I just got here i'm not used to doing that. I'm not used to doing that, so my family take care of me for now. It's not good but.

BJ: How do they make a living?

N: they work in the STates. they work. Pero I'ma to Roatan now cause they don't discriminate when it comes to the tattoos. Cause a lot of white people run the stuff over there. They got a lot of businesses over there. So they don't discriminate about tattoos cause they got tattoos theyselves.  
Ben: One last question um. Cause you've kind of talked about, well I guess some people would look at your life... how old are you?

N: I'm twenty five.

Ben: Twenty five. Some people might look at your life and say man, he's really messed up, he's blown it. Like you can't go back to the STates legally, um you got tattoos here. It's hard, that sort of thing. Do you think if you had I guess been closer to the Garifuna culture and respecting parents and living that, do you think your life would be different?

N: Yeah, yeah. Way different.

BJ: Can you say that? Basically what he said?

N: My life would be way more different cause like I told you, somos humildes. Somos humildes. They they um, my Garifuna people they they stare you (?) for doing the wrong thing. They want to see you do the right thing as a black kid, they gonna mess, gash your head about. Yo, let's go They gonna paint the good thing. But they gain the good thing, they gain it the wrong way. All hustlin', killing people. Prostitutin' people.

BJ: Drugs.

N: Drugs. But my Garifuna people, they gonna teach you how to work hard for your money. Cuase the thing that come easy, it's not worth havin' it.

BJ: Can you just say that your life would have been easier if you had respected the culture more? Can you say that?

N: Right, my life would be easier.

BJ: Would you say it?

N: Yes.

BJ: No, no. I want you to say it.

N: Oh, my life would be easier if I had stuck to my Garifuna culture.

Ben: And then kind of a follow up question. What made you go away from it.

N: I told you, when I left I was a baby man. And in my neighborhood, there wasn't that much Garifuna people in my neighborhood. It was, you only see blacks, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans. Every time I go to school, all you see is black kids running around. Being that i was young, I thought that the things that they do it was fun. It started by playing basketball. Then going to the mall, hanging out. Then the nice clothes, the girls. The girls, you give them a lot of attention. To me, I'm from Honduras, oh you a foreigner. Girls don't want to know about you, they don't want to talk to you. It's the way you dress, it's the way you look. You you nappy headed. And once I started hanging with the black kids, they started dressing me up. And the girls started coming and the money started coming and that's how it started.

Ben: If you could go back, would you do it differently?

N: Yes, I would stick to my Garifuna people more. Cause I'm not gonna get in trouble with them. It's hard to get into trouble with Garifuna people.

BJ: They're more obedient aren't they?

N: Right, yeah yeah.

BJ: Can you say that too?

N: Yeah, they more obedient. Love my Garifuna people man. I regret not hanging out with them. Cause I know if I had stuck with my people, sometimes it's better to stick with your people. Cause you can do more better, you can do a lot of good things.

BJ: Why do you think they're more obedient?

N: good question. Why? That's a good question. Why I think they obedient. Cause they appreciate things more. They they've been through more stuff they been through more stuff. They appreciate life more, things more.

BJ: Maybe respect for other people is a big part of Garifuna.

N: Right, right. Cause they do respect, we do respect people.

BJ: Yeah, so like in the states, the youth don't always like to respect authority. And the authority sometimes abuses that but here, people respect authority.

N: Yeah, cause over here, they ain't gonna play witchoo over here. Over here you could do anything and get away with it... basically. in the states they got more, they more organized.

They laws is more strict. There's a lot of crimes going over here but. Like over here in our community it not be that much things going on. they might steal little, little stuff. But you ain't gonna have no killing going on, no shooting going on. No stabbing going on. This is free village, whatever you want to call it, town. More safe over here.

BJ: Like if the mayor of the city or aldea, el patronato says something, everybody does it. right? Everybody follows?

N: right Right. Cause we know they ain't gonna steer us wrong. They doing it to better the community.

BJ: And that, I think, carries over into the states.

N; Right right right. It's a lot of unity going on over here. Now. Cause back in the day it was, it was, this town was messed up. When I left, but now we got more houses now, we got more pro, we got some programs out here now. It's a little better now.

BJ: I think that's good.