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More Than a Heritage: Julie Orlando on What It Means to Be Argentine

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The Sound of Argentina

I am both Argentine and Italian, and those two parts of me have always felt beautifully intertwined. Italian heritage runs deeply through Argentine culture, in the rhythm of our Spanish, the way we talk with our hands, the food we gather around, our humor, and, maybe most of all, our deep devotion to family. My Hispanic identity is distinctly South American, unmistakably Argentine, and very close to my heart.

Growing up, one of my heroes was Gabriela “Gaby” Sabatini. Watching an Argentine woman compete on the world stage meant so much to me because I could see a piece of myself and my country in her. Years later, Manu Ginóbili gave me that same feeling of pride. Even though he is now retired, I still remember what it felt like to watch an Argentine become one of the most respected international players in basketball. Representation matters. There is something incredibly powerful about seeing someone from your country succeed internationally and feeling, even for a moment, that the whole world is seeing a little bit of where you come from.

That feeling of national pride may be strongest for me when it comes to fútbol. I could never talk about Argentina without mentioning Lionel Messi, Diego Maradona, and our national team. For Argentines, the 1986 World Cup will always belong to Maradona, just as the 2022 World Cup belongs to Messi and the entire team that brought the trophy home after 36 years. During the World Cup, my children and I proudly wore our Argentina jerseys, and even our Morkie, Bailey, joined in with Argentina’s colors. It was joyful and emotional and ours. It was also a way of sharing that pride with my children and passing a piece of my heritage on to them. These moments are never just about sports. They become family memories and national memories, connecting generations of Argentines no matter where in the world we happen to be.

That pride can be hard for me to explain, but I feel it instantly. When I hear the opening notes of “De Música Ligera” by Soda Stereo, I get goosebumps. When Argentina

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competes internationally and I hear the trumpets in our national anthem. I can hardly keep it together. In those moments, Argentina does not feel far away at all. It feels immediate, alive, and part of me.

Of course, Argentina also tastes like home. It is facturas, empanadas, alfajores, and asados. But the food is really only part of it. What those foods bring back are the long conversations, strong opinions, laughter, celebrations, and people gathered around the table. Argentine culture is warm and expressive, but it is also modern, creative, intellectually curious, and shaped by a complex history of immigration and cultural exchange.

My background has also shaped the way I show up in my work as a family law attorney. It has taught me that family, identity, communication, and conflict can be understood very differently across cultures. It has also taught me how much it matters to make people feel seen. Clients do not leave their cultural backgrounds at the door when they enter a legal proceeding. Understanding that context, communicating across differences, and sometimes speaking with a client in the language in which they feel most comfortable helps me build trust and advocate for them with more care and connection.

There is no single Hispanic experience, and that is one of the things I love most.

Latin America includes so many countries, histories, accents, traditions, and identities. Even Argentine Spanish has its own unmistakable sound. Our accent is often imitated or teased because of the way we pronounce “ll” and “y,” and because we use “vos” instead of “tú.” I love those differences because they immediately identify me as Argentine. At the same time, I love that Spanish connects me to people throughout Latin America and Spain. It allows us to recognize one another across borders while still celebrating all the things that make each of our cultures unique.