

Interview of Nicholas "Sheshe" Varela by Nha Nguyen
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Abstract: Nha Nguyen interviews Nicholas "Sheshe" Varela about his side-gig job: DoorDash. Nicholas is a Senior at Loyola New Orleans University who is majoring in business in finance and international business. He is from Quito, Ecuador. The discussion centers around why he decided to DoorDash, the pros and cons of it, why he wished they had a gig economy back at his home country of Ecuador, and how working in DoorDash has helped him as a college student. Additionally, he notes that because his mother has U.S. citizenship, he does as well. Therefore, he can work for DoorDash unlike some of his friends who cannot due to being international students. Nicholas hopes to go back to Ecuador one day, but also hopes that the political corruption will be better by the time he settles there to have a permanent job and raise a family there. To Nicholas, DoorDash is an opportunity that is not available back at his country. Therefore he has taken full advantage of it.

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[00:00:00.00] Nha Nguyen: "Okay so we're gonna start with a little background..Um, Tell me a little bit a little bit about you...your name and where you're from and..uh..where you go to school and what's your major.

[00:00:11.05] Nicholas Varela: Okay my name is Nicholas Varela. I'm 22 years old. I am originally from Quito, Ecuador in South America and I'm studying in Loyola University for a business major in finance and international business.

[00:00:26.08] Nha Nguyen: Okay um what's it like in Ecuador?

[00:00:29.04] Nicholas Varela: I like it a lot it's it's a fun place to grow up in ...And my whole family is there so I do miss them. I like the mountains, we have beaches, we have the Galapagos Island, we have the Amazon and the only bad thing that I don't like about Ecuador is the politicians because they're really corrupt and they ruin my country.

[00:00:50.23] Nha Nguyen: Yeah um so it made you like come here and like have this major.

[00:00:55.10] Nicholas Varela: Um I always wanted to study in the States because it's an amazing opportunity for me. It's an amazing opportunity for me. My family was able to provide that for me so I'm taking advantage of it to the maximum.

[00:01:05.14] Nha Nguyen: Yeah um are you an international student?

[00:01:08.12] Nicholas Varela: Um I'm not. I have an American passport so luckily I applied like an American citizen, but I lived all my life in Ecuador.

[00:01:15.07] Nha Nguyen: Gotcha.

[00:01:15.23] Nicholas Varela: My mom is American, so that's why I have the American passport.

[00:01:18.11] Nha Nguyen: Understandable

[00:01:19.05] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:01:19.13] Because I think as.. if I'm reading correctly.. DoorDash you have to be like a U.S citizen.

[00:01:23.07] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:01:23.16] Nha Nguyen: Right?

[00:01:24.01] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:01:24.08] Nha Nguyen: And so that's why you're able to do it. Um so what attracted you to work for DoorDash and not like any other um...work?

[00:01:32.00] Nicholas Varela: Because I had a car, and when the gas prices were cheap my roommate started doing DoorDash. So he told me like "Hey um you can win a lot like you can win it's a good side hustle when you're in college, because since you have to study and work you can like mix them up and make your own schedule. Work your own schedule so it's a good opportunity now that I have a car. I was

like yeah I'm going to start doing it. The gas prices luckily went down, so I started doing it again and I like it. It's a good side hustle for college.

[00:02:01.16] Nha Nguyen: Right um so when did you like mostly do it? Was it during that time I mean do you still do it?

[00:02:07.01] Nicholas Varela: It was during COVID time during I started doing it. And then I started doing it like..um... I did an internship once. And after I finished my internship and in the night, I did a night shift of only DoorDash. So I really liked it, and then this year.. for this year I bought a car. And I'm doing DoorDash with that car during like school time. Whenever I'm not in class, I try to DoorDash during lunch and dinner.

[00:02:33.00] Nha Nguyen: Yeah.

[00:02:33.17] Nicholas Varela: At least to make some extra money.

[00:02:35.17] Nha Nguyen: Do you have to pay for your own gas?

[00:02:37.11] Nicholas Varela: I have to pay for my own gas, but they give you..give you.. a card...um.. that they gave you like two percent back for every time you put gas on on the car.

[00:02:45.11] Nha Nguyen: Gotcha yeah with gas prices that's like risen up recently, how's that..how's that like?

[00:02:51.00] Nicholas Varela: When gas prices rose up, they gave an incentive to like they gave us like promotions as well as from the two percent of the cash back they gave you ten percent back. So if you put 45..4.5..dollars went back to you and that added up and that really helped alleviate something. Sometimes the gas prices.

[00:03:12.05] Nha Nguyen: Right um has it been helping like paying bills or like certain things?

[00:03:17.20] Nicholas Varela: Yes it's helping me pay for like..I like doing DoorDash to like save up money. Pay for like help paying for my car. It'll pay for like the insurance. It helps me sometimes save up to like pay for trips. Like I'm going to Thailand like on January so it's helping me like I'm saving up during DoorDash to like enjoy a little bit my time over there.

[00:03:38.10] Nha Nguyen: Awesome! Is Thailand is that the study abroad or?

[00:03:41.05] Nicholas Varela: Yeah the study abroad but after that I'm staying with my other roommate like for two more weeks. And we're just gonna travel around southeast Asia, because it's a nice experience

[00:03:47.15] Nha Nguyen: Oh that's a really.. that's gonna be a really great experience...

[00:03:50.00] Nicholas Varela: Great experience.

[00:03:51.05] Nha Nguyen: Um... so what are like in your opinion like the best things about the job?

[00:03:55.21] Nicholas Varela: The best things about the job are probably the flexibility and the availability like... I like that you can do your schedules, you can make like if you want to work at eight...ten you can work at 8:10. Or if you can work if you want to work at night at night you can work at night and you can work until whatever time you want. If you're tired at 10 pm you can say yep I'm done doing DoorDash. That's it.

[00:04:17.08] Nha Nguyen: Yeah...

[00:04:17.19] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:04:18.22] Nha Nguyen: Um... so if you don't mind me asking like how much money do you usually make?

[00:04:22.06] Nicholas Varela: I usually make...it depends on like the days. Like from Mondays to Wednesdays, I usually don't make a lot of money. And I only do it at night, because a lot of like students a lot of like families order from there. So on average like on Monday to Wednesday, I make around like fifty to sixty dollars around it. And then on with the weekends, it's where it goes better. Like on on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays I make around depending on how many hours. I do sometimes like at 23 dollars an hour approximately. So like \$23.25. Depends on the tips as well. if people give you like good tips like you win more money and on Sundays um it's the best day because of NFL Sundays. A lot of people already like wings, pizza so you can make around like 50 dollars an hour probably.

[00:05:09.14] Nha Nguyen: Yeah...yeah so it sounds like there's a lot of like benefits for sure.

[00:05:14.17] Nha Nguyen: Um so turning kind of like other side of.. what are some... what was the most unusual thing that's like happened like during the job?

[00:05:23.03] Nicholas Varela: Um.. the most unusual thing that has happened to me is that um... sometimes I have to go to the hotels and in downtown and just like go up like 20 floors just to leave the order there. And that's something like I don't know it kind of surprises me that they don't make it leave it on the lobby. They allow like a driver to go up and I don't know it surprised me

[00:05:45.10] Nha Nguyen: That's very true. Um... so um... do you ever feel like there's a danger in terms of like being a driver?

[00:05:56.02] Nicholas Varela: Yes. Um... mostly at night especially here in New Orleans like... it's you hear all about like the news about the car thefts some of the carjackings about theft in general. So yeah I try to avoid like the dangerous areas of New Orleans like East New Orleans and those parts just to be sure to I only do it usually in downtown or or in the Garden District so there. So I tried to avoid the danger places especially at night.

[00:06:25.20] Nha Nguyen: Yeah so whenever like so, just trying to understand like the process of it... so whenever like an order comes up...do you have to accept it before you do it or it's like you have to do it?

[00:06:37.02] Nicholas Varela: No. It.. With the app there appears like little message where it says like an approximate of how much they're going to give with tip. They don't give you the actual amount of how much you're gonna pay. They give you like let's say um "This tip is going to be five dollars for an 1.3 miles. Do you want to accept it or decline?" And they put the restaurant's name. So I usually just take

orders over the seven dollars and usually two dollars a mile, so that I can make up for gas and mileage so usually that's...that's what I think.

[00:07:08.08] Nha Nguyen: Gotcha. Um... is there any cons about like working for DoorDash..do you feel?

[00:07:14.04] Nicholas Varela: Yeah. I think the cons are maybe um... no tippers are... but I understand why people don't tip like if I'm a student and I don't have a lot of money, I don't like to tip. But yeah usually when tips like... when you get on order for like five dollars and you see that tip is zero and you're like okay that's a downside but I understand why people don't tip. And the other things are usually that DoorDash has like base pay and they fluctuate depending on I don't know why. But sometimes like the base pay is five dollars or seven dollars in other days it's like two dollars, and I don't like that like

[00:07:50.00] Nha Nguyen: Yeah there seems to be more of like a political... economy sort of influence in terms of like the base pay it seems um... but do you think the highest ever happened... when was it like the highest like base pay? Do you remember?

[00:08:05.00] Nicholas Varela: Um for me it was six dollars size base pay not including tips but with tips it can get up to like 10... 12 depends on how much tip they give you.

[00:08:13.08] Nha Nguyen: Do you remember like when that occurred?

[00:08:16.16] Nicholas Varela: Um it just depends ... There's some weeks where it's six dollars where it's three dollars so

[00:08:22.01] Nha Nguyen: Oh wow so it changes like a few weeks?

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[00:08:24.15] Nicholas Varela: Yeah like every few weeks. So it's kind of like, that's what I don't like about it

[00:08:27.16] Nha Nguyen: That's true I never thought about that actually I didn't know about that. I thought maybe it would be every few months but no it seems like it happens pretty frequently.

[00:08:36.12] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:08:36.00] Nha Nguyen: Interesting I wonder why.

[00:08:37.18] Nicholas Varela: Yeah I have no idea.

[00:08:38.20] Nha Nguyen: You have no idea right?

[00:08:39.13] Nicholas Varela: No

[00:08:39.18] Nha Nguyen: Huh... um yeah I mean do you think... do you ever see yourself like doing this long term?

[00:08:48.01] Nicholas Varela: No. I'm doing it just for college, extra money, it's a good side hustle. But I don't think it's like a good path to follow for a steady income and a steady lifestyle.

[00:09:00.02] Nha Nguyen: Yeah. In relation to like the lifestyle and such that you want to achieve because like now you're a... senior?

[00:09:08.09] Nicholas Varela: Yeah I'm a senior right now

[00:09:09.07] Nha Nguyen: Um you know you talked a little about being from Ecuador and like you're going here and um you're majoring in business yeah international business and finance...

[00:09:17.07] Nha Nguyen: Um what do you hope to achieve or like what are your like goals or dreams that you want to do?

[00:09:22.00] Nicholas Varela: Um for the future?

[00:09:23.10] Nha Nguyen: Mhm.

[00:09:23.20] Nicholas Varela: Um my dream is to like get a good job here, a good paying job stay for a few years, save up, and then go back to my country and like create businesses there. Hopefully the political like the political environment there is good so that I can go back like in general I want to have like a family back in Ecuador, because I want my kids to grow up like I did and... yeah that's my plan like stay here work, work the most amount of money I can. Then go back to Ecuador and have the experience the work experience maybe a master's degree and then start working like with doing whatever I can.

[00:10:00.00] Nha Nguyen: Yeah sure that's that's amazing that's great. Um also just on a side note can you explain to me more about the political like issues that are happening? Because like I don't know much about it.

[00:10:11.03] Nicholas Varela: Yeah um for like the last 10 years we had like a a really left-wing president called Rafael Correa he was like the 21st socialism um tendency which is like a relationship to like Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro and to like Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua. So there were a lot of corruption in cases, a lot of like political persecution against business people, business owners, against newspapers, against journalists, and it was like a time of like a lot of a lot of in like a lot of fight between like the rich, the middle class, and the um high class. And when once he left office, there was a lot of political instability because the indigenous community in Ecuador and with the rising prices in gas. They paralyzed the country for like two weeks and then with the new president again, they paralyzed the country again for two weeks so it was like right now there's a lot of like political tensions between the left-wing governments and the right-wing like political parties.

[00:11:15.16] Nha Nguyen: Yeah wow um how has it affected you and your family like directly?

[00:11:21.08] Nicholas Varela: I'm directly thankfully to my family we were good during those times um we could feel like the the tensions between like a lot of people, a lot of like family friends like were affected by it um by the like the political persecutions of them like they were like fined or jailed or sentenced to jail and a lot of people were like it's not fair like to have like a president that does that and then a lot of corruption scandals that affected the country in general and if the country is doing bad like that affects everyone so yeah with the corruption scandals with the little investment that there existed in Ecuador for that time

period a lot of like a lot of in the wealth inequality like went down but a lot of like.. the like... a lot of there wasn't a lot of money coming in... to the country.

[00:12:13.08] Nha Nguyen: Gotcha.

[00:12:14.00] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:12:14.10] Nha Nguyen: Yeah I'm so sorry to hear that there's so much instability like that. Um... so you feel like you know you're saving up money you're working and you're trying to get this degree and you're doing it for your family right? Um... do you ever feel like there's some sort of pressure in a way?

[00:12:31.07] Nicholas Varela: Um pressure always um yeah my family is paying to for me to study here to like...be try my best um I I have to try my best that's like the pressure I have on like I don't want my parents to like I want them to be proud like I want them to feel like "Okay we sent him here, and he did it. And we're happy for him, and hopefully we set him up for life."

[00:12:56.03] Nha Nguyen: Yeah um... so like going back a little bit to DoorDash besides like the bills and you know you're going to Thailand is there anything else that... any reasons of like why you're working for DoorDash like anything else like you're paying off? Or um.

[00:13:13.06] Nicholas Varela: I'm paying off the car right now, so it tells me like to pay off the car as well yeah. So like usually like one can make like a hundred dollars a day mine is like gas would be like \$70 so if you do that like seven days a week you can make enough money to pay off a car at least the payments of the car and they have a little money to save up and yeah.

[00:13:36.02] Nha Nguyen: Did you say... so you said you brought your car like you that was like your own money and everything when you got it?

[00:13:40.20] Nicholas Varela: I've been saving options my internship so I've been doing like my internship, Doordash with a friend's car, and I started saving up and and I was able to buy the car.

[00:13:51.10] Nha Nguyen: Right have you ever felt like... what if something happened to your car?

[00:13:55.12] Nicholas Varela: I have insurance so luckily if something happens hopefully like um hopefully I drive well so hopefully I don't have like any crashes anytime soon or nothing like that hopefully the car stays as it is right now it's in perfect condition so hopefully hopefully I can keep it that way.

[00:14:17.09] Nha Nguyen: Yeah um...so besides car insurance you have like health insurance or anything else to kind of like help you like in case like something happens?

[00:14:26.19] Nicholas Varela: yeah I have health insurance. I have the university health insurance I think yeah.

[00:14:29.19] Nha Nguyen: Gotcha.

[00:14:30.15] Nicholas Varela: The international one, yeah.

[00:14:32.13] Nha Nguyen: Um even though you're not going to probably work long term um I think the reason why my professor is so interested in this topic is because it's such a new thing like now you can

make a lot of money through just like an app economy kind of way um where do you think this will be like 10 years from now like from like in the future?

[00:14:52.06] Nicholas Varela: I think in the future if like inflation prices like if inflation goes up if gas prices could be going up a lot of people are going to stop stop doing it in the DoorDash in general the company keeps lowering the base pays and people with inflation as it is right now don't want to tip like a lot of drivers are going to say um I'm better off not working for DoorDash as I'm saving up gas and mileage so I think in 10 years if if this if that if this trend continues like it's happening in the last two years I think DoorDash... I don't know will probably have more more trouble like yeah as a company.

[00:15:33.12] Nha Nguyen: Yeah and because you said that the high speed was six but what was the lowest?

[00:15:37.17] Nicholas Varela: Like \$2.50

[00:15:39.05] Nha Nguyen: \$2.50?

[00:15:40.00] Yeah so if people didn't tip it was like \$2.50. where you went for like an order there so it was like... yeah that's why at least you have the the ability to decline the order so if you see \$2.50 you know probably going to tip so you declined it and that's why a lot of people like when they order DoorDash it takes like a really long time.

[00:15:58.08] Nha Nguyen: Yeah.

[00:15:59.07] Nicholas Varela: Because the drivers can see like like the average pay like if they see two dollars they're not they're not gonna accept it. But if they see like seven they're obviously going to accept. It's more probable to to take it and deliver it fast.

[00:16:12.08] Nha Nguyen: Um do you know anyone else that also DoorDashes like around like your cohort or like your group of friends or someone like around your age?

[00:16:20.08] Nicholas Varela: Yeah my roommates used to DoorDash. My my other roommate he graduated already, but he used to DoorDash um I have a...an American friend who also recommended me to do DoorDash so we were like 'hey you can do DoorDash as a side hustle and win some extra money, save up.' Um he studies here's as well, so he also told me about DoorDash.

[00:16:41.04] Nha Nguyen: Yeah gotcha and so if you've chosen DoorDash because of the benefits that you told me about the flexibility.

[00:16:46.27] Nicholas Varela: Yeah

[00:16:47.28] Nha Nguyen: Um.

[00:16:47.01] Nicholas Varela: I I also do like I vary with the three apps with UberEats, DoorDash and GrubHub. Because sometimes GrubHub has better offers or better pay. Sometimes UberEats has and sometimes DoorDash, but I usually do DoorDash because more people, there's more restaurants around the area to do DoorDash.

[00:17:05.03] Nha Nguyen: Yeah I didn't know that you did those three, so if you don't mind like how is DoorDash compared to like UberEats or GrubHub?

[00:17:13.03] Nicholas Varela: It's kind of similar like mostly most of them are kind of similar it just depends on the restaurants like GrubHub has better restaurants like better like high paying restaurants like better-ends so it's better when it's like a busy season like on Fridays like to do GrubHub because a lot of like um families order from like this... nice restaurants so the tips is much better than like going from DoorDash to a McDonald's and getting a McDonalds.

[00:17:39.11] Nha Nguyen: Right interesting...um... have you ever had any troubles with UberEats or GrubHub or anything like that?

[00:17:47.08] Nicholas Varela: Um the only problems is sometimes a client like says like the order never came so DoorDash actually is like um "Hey we received a complaint that the order didn't come." But I I they told me my friends told me that to always take a picture of the order in the house, so that when this happens. Because a lot of people are like ...I don't want to say like they're like... sneaky like they get the order and then they're like nope they didn't I didn't get it and they get their money back so I I know a lot of people that have done that like personally a lot of people who have done that as my... like a couple of friends so I know how how it is so I always try to take a picture of it so that when that does happen, I send it to DoorDash so that you can see that I have delivered it.

[00:18:34.02] Nha Nguyen: Yeah so next so like tying to my next question, have you ever had to interact with the people that you're like delivering the food with have you ever had good bad like interactions with them?

[00:18:45.22] Nicholas Varela: Usually and luckily I I've only had good people like um that I have delivered um. Usually I don't see them face to face mostly it's leave at the door the order. But when I meet face to face I'm just like "Here's your Order." And they're like thank you and that's it um and usually the only interaction I have is when I don't know where that place is I have to call them and be like "Hey I'm kind of lost like can you give me directions?" But usually they're pretty nice so yeah I haven't had any trouble.

[00:19:12.02] Nha Nguyen: Awesome um... so do you ever feel like there are times...where you feel like you didn't want to do the job because like I understand like there is definitely like benefits and such but I ever feel like it's hard to do it sometimes in a way.

[00:19:30.21] Nicholas Varela: Yeah sometimes I I'm just too lazy. Like after going to school I'm finishing homework or doing a project, I'm like "Yeah yeah I'm not gonna do DoorDash today." Maybe after I don't know like staying up late or something and then the next thing I'm tired and I'm like yeah I'm not gonna do it or a Sunday when I just want to stay home I'm like yeah I'm just not gonna do doors today.

[00:19:52.01] Nha Nguyen: Right but you'll [usually] do it because you're motivated.

[00:19:55.03] Nicholas Varela: I'm motivated to get money like right now I want the money just to save up and be like you have extra money for me to enjoy like enjoy the trip enjoy um help pay off my car at least so yeah it works just have extra money.

[00:20:08.22] Nha Nguyen: Um... what else let's see... no like I think I always like I used to I work at a restaurant right now and the restaurant that I worked before we had a bunch of like UberEats people, and I never really saw like people that worked for UberEats before until I worked there and there's different

people of ages, backgrounds. Like I've seen like a father with a kid with him picking up from school like it's so interesting to me that you can be like of any age any background and you can still do it. Um... and so I find it really interesting that there's also like a lot of college students and how they deal with that you know integrating that with like their like... how to balance that with school and everything. Um do you ever feel like that's difficult to balance or...?

[00:20:56.07] Nicholas Varela: Um it's not difficult right now because I luckily just have like two classes a day and they're like in the middle of the day so I can do it at night easily. I have time to like go to the gym like um go home make myself some lunch make a little some dinner and then like from eight to twelve work and then sleep until like eight nine and be and doing doing it all over again I really like my schedule.

[00:21:20.08] Nha Nguyen: Yeah I'm glad.

[00:21:21.07] Nicholas Varela: It works perfectly.

[00:21:22.14] Nha Nguyen: Um... so you said that you're going to stop doing this job once you graduate right [laughing] um how does your family feel like do they know that you work?

[00:21:33.13] Nicholas Varela: Yeah they know.

[00:21:34.11] Nha Nguyen: Yeah.

[00:21:34.29] Nicholas Varela: I told him like "Mom I just need to make some extra money." Like... my parents are sending me like they send me money like every month like to pay rent and to like help like with some kinds of stuff. But after that I'm like, "Hey parents, I think I could help you as well like maybe I could help pay off my car you pay my rent." And then if I work I can also like pay my trips instead of asking my parents for like, "Hey, pay for my a thousand dollar trip to Thailand." I'm like, I can make a DoorDash, work for like a month, save up and then I can pay myself so that you don't have to... or something like that.

[00:22:11.21] Nha Nguyen: That's that's awesome um... so there's this like you're doing it for so that your parents don't have to worry or like have to pay for such because they do like you mentioned earlier like they pay for your you know for you to come here.

[00:22:25.06] Nicholas Varela: Yeah because I know they're paying a lot of money to send me here, so I also want to like not be like those students that don't do anything like just go to the house and just sit there. And yeah I'm like I'm gonna do this to do my trips because I have to take advantage that I'm in the states so that I could travel in the college so yeah I try to save up try to make that money to save up for trips for like as I said the car payments and then for extra money for who knows yeah just to save up or I don't know invest or something.

[00:22:56.08] Nha Nguyen: Right um... so... since you're not international student actually I know that from what I've heard was that like a lot of international students have to choose like a business degree to be able to like to stay here.

[00:23:09.08] Nicholas Varela: Yeah they need the OTP. A lot of international students need the OTP like usually stem students get like OTP for like two years where they can work and then get like a work visa.

[00:23:21.21] Nha Nguyen: Right.

[00:23:23.02] Nicholas Varela: After those two years, but it's really hard for them usually for the OTP after the OTP, because it's like a lottery. So a lot of international students have a lot of trouble like finding a job. A lot of international students have because of personal experiences I live with three people that don't have an American passport I see I see how hard it is for them and that's why I'm lucky that then my mom was American so yeah I really am appreciate it.

[00:23:48.03] Nha Nguyen: Yeah... because like some of your friends like have they ever felt like they wanted to work at DoorDash but they can't because they don't have...?

[00:23:54.18] Nicholas Varela: Yeah they don't have a social (social security card) or because if they don't have a social social they can't buy a car. They can't do a lot of things.

[00:24:01.15] Nha Nguyen: Yeah.

[00:24:02.18] Nicholas Varela: So yeah as an international student, I find it very hard for them like to to find work like work that's not in college.

[00:24:10.15] Nha Nguyen: For sure like um like Alfredo, for example, like your housemate and like my friend. Like he works at Loyola and I do feel like you know it's hard for him sometimes he's always talking to me about trying to make money. He was so excited when his social security number came in. Like he was so excited like I I you know I do wish the best for him, but I know like how hard it is for sure like you want to make money but it's not easy and like especially yeah.

[00:24:32.12] Nicholas Varela: Yeah with that social he can do a lot of things now.

[00:24:34.08] Nha Nguyen: yeah

[00:24:34.10] Nicholas Varela: Like start working like legally he can start working in like a restaurant if he wants to yeah for for the OTP as well he already has a social that gives him a lot of like more like opportunities.

[00:24:46.16] Nha Nguyen: Yeah... um and so do you feel like did you choose the major that because you wanted to?

[00:24:53.05] Nicholas Varela: Um yes.

[00:24:53.29] Nha Nguyen: Like that was the thing you were most interested in in a way?

[00:24:56.13] Nicholas Varela: I always like Finance I always like like the international business side of things. I was like like politics and everything and, I found I find this really connected to it. So I just I really like my my degree, and it's a high paying degree so I that's also something I look forward to.

[00:25:14.23] Nha Nguyen: Yeah for sure um... yeah I mean I think that's amazing that you know you have those aspirations those goals and everything now you seem like really motivated um. Do you um when did you start doing DoorDash again?

[00:25:31.07] Nicholas Varela: I started doing DoorDash two years ago.

[00:25:33.10] Nha Nguyen: Two years ago?

[00:25:33.26] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:25:35.15] Nha Nguyen: That's really nice! I feel like I asked you a lot of questions... um...let's see what time it is I want to make sure... um let's see I think we're almost done I think it's been 30 [minutes] but um...is there anything else that you want to mention about what's it like to work like with um under like a gig economy?

[00:25:59.12] Nicholas Varela: Um I just find it interesting as well when I came here I was like um like it was a culture shock like I don't want to be political of how many people like don't like the United States. I just want to... I don't know why like a lot of people just don't know how lucky they are to like live in this country that gives you this types of opportunities. If you want to work, you could have like a job so it's it's amazing to me that like and in DoorDash like you can make more money like in one day than like a person in Ecuador for like a month and that's what just keeps me like crazy about this country like how easy it is to make some money.

[00:26:35.13] Nha Nguyen: You're actually right, because I I realized that again I don't know I don't think there's a lot of countries that have this sort of gig economy.

[00:26:43.03] Nicholas Varela: That's what they're pregnant about like the United States how easy it was like to get like it took me five minutes to log into DoorDash and started working making it just like that.

[00:26:51.12] Nha Nguyen: Interesting, yeah you're so right. I didn't even think about that like um I don't know what other countries do this but I think that's why it's such a large hot topic because like you said Ecuador doesn't have something like that.

[00:27:04.01] Nicholas Varela: We don't have it

[00:27:04.22] Nha Nguyen: Um.. no that's really interesting. Uh do you ever feel like you would want that kind of economy like in other countries?

[00:27:14.12] Nicholas Varela: Yeah I would personally love it if Ecuador went more like on an American type of economy way like motivating business people instead of like government-owned businesses which is where corruption happens a lot. So that's why I like like the private ownership especially um yeah so private ownership is like I see it like something so important and this in this country it's it's amazing how they motivate like little businesses small businesses so that they can like support themselves and help themselves grow in comparison to like South American or Latin American countries where I know it's really hard to open a business because of all the regulations and laws that are in place.

[00:27:56.12] Nha Nguyen: For sure..uh...I I wonder if it's tied to this but like I've learned a lot about how the a lot of South American countries, a lot of African countries were affected by taking like really huge loans like from like the U.S. and there's a lot of like liberalization policies like to open like free trade, but what it did was that it really affected and didn't really protect people working like in those like countries.

[00:28:27.15] Nicholas Varela: Um yeah it's a hot topic still in Ecuador like.. we like right now we are really close to the United States but in the past we were with China during those years so it's it was the same thing like the Chinese were like "Hey I'll give you like 100 million dollars and build yourself a port," but now we we're like slaves of China. And the same thing with the United States like the United States were like

I'll give you 100 million dollars give you a an oil refinery and then we were slaves here in the United States. But the difference is that the United States, at least like at least in Ecuador they fought like the drug cartels, they fought like a lot of crime and they also like gave a lot of things to Ecuador. But sadly in Ecuador, the politicians are really corrupt from left from right wing like every politician that goes into power just wants money.

[00:29:20.02] Nha Nguyen: Right, for their own and interests.

[00:29:21.11] Nicholas Varela: For their own interests, if they're left-wing they'll steal. If they're right-wing, they'll steal so it's like we're just hoping for a good leader that takes the country in the right way.

[00:29:32.19] Nha Nguyen: Yeah.

[00:29:34.01] Nicholas Varela: Hopefully.

[00:29:34.24] Nha Nguyen: Yeah uh so how do people are able to make substantial like money in Ecuador?

[00:29:41.20] Nicholas Varela: A lot of people don't make substantial money in Ecuador. Ecuador is a really poor country like...

[00:29:46.13] Nha Nguyen: Yeah.

[00:29:47.00] Nicholas Varela: There's a lot of wealth inequality. There's a lot of people with a lot of money, there's a lot of people with no money, and a struggling middle class. And usually the average salary in Ecuador for like a person is \$400 a month so that's what like it's the necessary thing to survive.

[00:30:04.04] Nha Nguyen: Yeah

[00:30:04.26] Nicholas Varela: But that's not the case for a lot of people like in the in like the rural zones. people who survive with less than like a dollar a day so it's like I don't know it's really tough. But um luckily I grew up like in a good family and that could take care of me, didn't have to go through financial problems and I'm really thankful for that.

[00:30:21.10] Nha Nguyen: Yeah if you don't mind me asking like what does your family do?

[00:30:23.26] Nicholas Varela: Um my dad is a lawyer in Ecuador. My mom works for the American Embassy. There is a medical staff.

[00:30:30.00] Nha Nguyen: Oh wow.

[00:30:30.18] Nicholas Varela: yeah.

[00:30:31.05] Nha Nguyen: I'm sure they worked really hard to look at where to get where they're at.

[00:30:33.22] Nicholas Varela: yeah definitely my grandparents as well.

[00:30:35.15] Nha Nguyen: Yeah but you say your mom is an American citizen is she from Ecuador?

[00:30:39.15] Nicholas Varela: Yeah she's from the states. She's from Washington DC. She grew up all her life there, met my dad, and then went back to Ecuador.

[00:30:45.27] Nha Nguyen: Oh.. so is your dad from Ecuador?

[00:30:48.21] Nicholas Varela: Yeah my dad is from Ecuador.

[00:30:49.18] Nha Nguyen: Oh, so they met in the U.S?

[00:30:51.11] Nicholas Varela: They met in Ecuador my mom...

[00:30:53.00] Nha Nguyen: Ohh.

[00:30:53.13] Nicholas Varela: Yeah. My grandparents are Ecuadorian and they want to live in the States. because of the American dream and it went pretty well for them. S they stayed here and my mom was born here, raised all her life in DC. And then they went back to Ecuador for like a vacation she met my dad they fell in love, and here I am.

[00:31:11.21] Nha Nguyen: Yeah

[00:31:12.20] Nicholas Varela: That's their story

[00:31:16.00] Nha Nguyen: Yeah you talked a little bit about it about it... the American dream like what's your opinion

[00:31:20.25] Nicholas Varela: Um... I don't know right now if it's the same as it was like in the 60s. I see it more hard I don't know with all the political tensions that's happening in this country as well yeah I just don't don't see it as a as a positive thing to like look forward to with the division between Republicans and Democrats I just hear...

[00:31:38.26] Nha Nguyen: So much polarization.

[00:31:40.15] Nicholas Varela: Yes everything is politicized in this age. So I just don'... t I just don't hope this country doesn't go like on on the way like of Latin American countries or or that thing

[00:31:53.11] Nha Nguyen: Yeah sure...um.. you said that you wanted to go back to Ecuador?

[00:32:00.02] Nicholas Varela: Yeah

[00:32:00.16] Nha Nguyen: Is that where you want to live for like the rest of your life?

[00:32:03.04] Nicholas Varela: Yeah I want to live my whole life and Ecuador at least. At least I... my plan is like study here and work here for at least 10 years when I'm 30 go back to Ecuador have my family there um hopefully have like a good experience, work experience that I could get a good job, there a good paying job there. And hopefully that as I said before the political um a political environment in those times is it's good because sometimes the political is so bad that people have to leave the country just to to make ends meet.

[00:32:36.21] Nha Nguyen: So when I guess it would be my second to last question but what in your opinion is what what do Ecuador needs to do because you said that you want it to be more of like an American kind of like economy especially like we talked about like the gig economy like what do you think Ecuador needs more besides like a [good] political leader?

[00:32:54.01] Nicholas Varela: It needs education mostly. I think education is the most important thing for like person in general. Like if a person is uneducated, a lot of people take advantage of them. And sadly in Ecuador, a lot of politicians take advantage of the uneducated people to get to power and to get more power and then abuse that power. And that's what happened like for the last 10 years so I think education is key, because if you teach like children how to like read, write, use the internet all that instead of just and building schools like um and making them. Like since they're young a lot of people the political like the the mentality of the Ecuadorians are going to change, because right now they want like everything handed to them, start working for it. I just don't like that about them, but that's what I what I like about this country. Like a lot of people here are like I'm gonna do it I'm gonna do it I'm gonna do it and I just want that that type of like ideas in the Ecuadorian society especially like in the lower class, because a lot of sadly a lot of the lower class are uneducated. So they don't understand much and a lot of people like take advantage of them. And that's what I really don't like, but that's why I think education is it's key for a good society to work and function.

[00:34:11.24] Nha Nguyen: For sure because it's unfair I guess in a way like for them to not... I mean they'll be more taken advantage of .

[00:34:17.29] Nicholas Varela: For sure. They don't have the same opportunities like to go to school. Like they have to travel like five hours to go to one school and it's just ridiculous for something like that to happen.

[00:34:26.04] Nha Nguyen: yeah I was going to say a little bit about like um I'm guessing they sent you here, because it has a better educational system than Ecuador.

[00:34:36.02] Nicholas Varela: Yeah 100 percent. They wanted me to not stay in University in Ecuador. They wanted me to go here.

[00:34:41.07] Nha Nguyen: Yeah.

[00:34:41.18] Nicholas Varela: They were like "Go to Europe or or the states because it's um we're gonna have better opportunities there. It's going to be a better like experience for you. And if you want, you can come back to Ecuador. But at least you did your education in the states. If I go back to Echo and have like a United States diploma, it gives me like a lot of like points if I'm getting hired there."

[00:35:02.08] Nha Nguyen: For sure.

[00:35:02.27] Nicholas Varela: But we do have like a ...we do still have like I go to like a good economy like they are private businesses, there are like a lot of banks in Ecuador so it's not as bad as it sounds. So yeah it's kind of like a mix between like there's are good parts of Ecuador and there's a bad parts of Ecuador.

[00:35:20.06] Nha Nguyen: Right

[00:35:20.13] Nicholas Varela: Like the pros and cons, all countries has them.

[00:35:22.22] Nha Nguyen: Right, but it's definitely a lot more unstable

[00:35:26.13] Nicholas Varela: Yes, because of the unstable because of the political politicians.

[00:35:32.17] Nha Nguyen: Um yeah I mean it's definitely again like I think what I'm hearing is like you're taking advantage of working at DoorDash something that's not in Ecuador not in other countries. You're taking advantage of this something that's you've been working for a few years and it seems like it's working really well in your life. Um.. but like now you're ready to... once you're graduating you're ready to take on a more of a full time job I'm assuming?

[00:35:54.29] Nicholas Varela: Yeah, a full-time job. More like real job like I don't want to say it's a fake job, but like a more real job.

[00:36:00.20] Nha Nguyen: It's a side hustle

[00:36:01.07] Nicholas Varela: Yeah it's a side hustle like I said like a side gig I don't consider it and I wouldn't recommend people to do like a as an income as a source of income, because it just depends on the days. Sometimes it's good sometimes it's bad if gas prices go up you're kind of destroying your car like like the mileage putting the mileage the wear and tear so that's something to think about.

[00:36:22.21] Nha Nguyen: For sure so it's not like something that's supposed to be kind of like a security for your financials and stuff like it's just a side thing.

[00:36:30.19] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:36:31.06] Nha Nguyen: Interesting um let's see ...okay I think we did enough um but I just want to say thank you for sharing with me a lot about not just working in the gig economy but also your life and where you're from.

[00:36:46.20] Nicholas Varela: Obviously.

[00:36:46.24] Nha Nguyen: And yeah and I really do appreciate you like sharing all that.

[00:36:50.10] Nicholas Varela: Yeah.

[00:36:51.00] Nha Nguyen: Um.. but yeah is there anything else or you're all good?

[00:36:54.20] Nicholas Varela: I'm all good .

[00:36:55.10] Nha Nguyen: Yeah.

[00:36:55.19] Nicholas Varela: are you?

[00:36:56.11] Nha Nguyen: All right I'm good I'm about to turn this off.