



All Relative: Defining Diego

Episode Six: Resist and Release

A Production of Somethin' Else and Sony Music Entertainment

MUSIC : repetitive gentle plucking of acoustic guitars with sounds that are filled with innocent wonder begins.

Diego: Previously, on All Relative: Defining Diego...

Dan: It was really the most miserable four years of my life, and I would never wish it on anybody.

Diego: I would like to have just died in my hometown, like Julia.

Laurie: You'd rather be dead?

Rachel Nolan: I know I should be able to say it was a terrible thing that international adoption was closed, or it was a wonderful thing it is a little bit unclear.

Ale Colom: The system was horrific. It was just...free market — it's the best example of — free market of children that I know of.

MUSIC: repetitive gentle plucking of an acoustic guitar with tones that are filled with innocent wonder ends.

MUSIC : repetitive gentle plucking of acoustic guitars with sounds that are filled with innocent wonder ends.

[Mic handling noise.]

Dan: The reason I called this family meeting, I have two agenda items. One is the trip to Guatemala. And two is I want to, uh, help you achieve your goals or something like that.

Laurie: Remember family meetings?

Diego: Yeah, we didn't have them very often. And it was usually when I was in trouble.

Laurie: Yeah, I think I usually called them. But *this* one Dan called. We were sitting at the kitchen table. And the part about achieving your goals — I think he was trying to get you to take school more seriously.

Diego: Yeah, and he was trying to get *you* not to run away from our problems. You had bought a ticket out of Saint Paul — out of our family.

Laurie: Yeah. 'Cause we were fighting all the time. And I just wanted to escape. So I was headed to Guatemala.

You guys were going to come visit at the holidays, and Dan was telling us why he thought the whole thing was a bad idea.

Dan: Because I feel like we've got all this stuff to work on. And by doing this, you're just sort of, you know, taking a pass on it, like a big timeout.

Dan: I'm not gonna like say, *Oh, let's cancel the tickets or let's not go down there. I just think that it's ill-advised and it would have been better to, uh, stay here and work on things...*

Laurie: “Work on things.” What he meant was the three of us were at each other's throats.

Diego: I mean, I was 16 years old. I was on so many meds. And I was like 80 pounds overweight. I was just angry, and a messed-up teenager.

And we were not getting along. And I was thinking — we weren't acting like much of a family.

Laurie: I even found myself wondering — should we even stay a family? I was thinking about how random it was. Like even the whole way we came together — it was paperwork not biology. With adoption, it was just timing.

THEME MUSIC: An uplifting and inspiring electronic beat begins with a strong guitar underneath begins softly.

Diego: Yeah, I just happened to be born when you guys were looking to adopt.

Laurie: And then Guatemala shut down international adoption, and they were basically saying that families like ours are not okay. That kids need to be with their biological families — or at least with families from the same country.

Diego: And here we were, with all these problems. So maybe that meant they were right.

THEME MUSIC: Swells with intensity and fades

Diego: I'm Diego Xicay Luke...

Laurie: I'm Laurie Stern...

Diego: And from Somethin' Else and Sony Music Entertainment, this is All Relative: Defining Diego, Episode 6, Resist and Release.

ACT ONE

Laurie: I can remember fall 2014 really well. 'Cause that's the fall when I was laid off from my job, at the end of October. I was really sad. And do you remember what home life was like around then?

Diego: I honestly think it just goes back to parenting style. Like, I couldn't handle routines. I couldn't handle doing your homework every day and doing...Dan was very like, *He'll learn real world consequences*. You know, he's like, *You wanna drop outta school? Fuck it. Fine. We'll let you drop outta school*. And you were like, *No, he's not. Like, you're staying in school...*and I was just like, not in a good mental space to, like, hear that. So I was like, *You're the villain*.

Diego: I was so stressed that it just made me very angry.

Laurie: I was stressed too. And you know, you can understand this now...[Laughs.]

Diego: [Laughs.] Oh yeah. I would be pissed if I were you.

Laurie: Yeah, but you can understand this now is, like, part of the pressure I felt on me that I put on you...was partly 'cause Dan has been such a *laissez-faire* parent. Like, *He'll figure it out, whatever, whatever*. And you know, meanwhile, you were seeing therapists and doctors that said, *Routine, structure, behavior, expectations. That's what he needs*. And, like, I'm all alone with this 'cause Dan wasn't gonna enforce any of this. And so, you know, a little bit, the less he did, the more I felt like I had to do. And then I was butting heads with the both of you all the time.

Diego: You're like, *I will go to Guatemala* and Dan and I were like, *Fine, good, go. We're glad you're gone. We don't want you here*. I mean, it was very, it was very toxic.

MUSIC: Bright, uplifting, acoustic arpeggio with glistening bells begins

Laurie: So that idea of escaping from you guys and Minnesota, in the winter?

Yeah, I did that. I moved to Antigua, this pretty little town between the capital and Santiago Atitlán. I got my own place, I took Spanish lessons, I freelanced radio stories...and I got some space. And you didn't drop out of school.

MUSIC: Bright, uplifting, acoustic arpeggio with glistening bells ends

Laurie: You and Dan came to visit over winter break. Dan and I stayed in my room and you had your own room. You kind of did your own thing in Antigua, but then of course we went to the village.

Diego: Yeah, I mean, we always go. It's like a pilgrimage for us.

Fifteen-year-old Diego: Can I have some water?

Laurie: Yes... Is this yours?

Twenty-two-year-old Diego: I looked sick. I mean, even Isabel and Dolores could tell I was very sick.

Dolores and Isabel: [Speaking Tzutujil.]...

Laurie: Yeah, and it had been a while since our previous trip. So last time she'd seen you, you were just a little kid, you know, adorable...

Twenty-two-year-old Diego: Right. And now I was fat, grown-up and unhealthy.

Fifteen-year-old Diego: I have kidney disease, the same that killed Julia. So I've survived that. So...yeah.

Dolores: Are you okay now?

Fifteen-year-old Diego: Yeah, I got a kidney transplant. But um...

Dolores: Oh...that's good.

Dolores and Isabel: [Speaking Tzutujil.]

Dolores: She lost her girl. Yeah. And you just lucky. And you have to take care of yourself and your mom and dad.

Laurie: Julia died. When she was 12. Probably because of her kidneys. Probably it was genetic. And here you were — a survivor because of the medical care you got. Because you were adopted.

Diego: You know, I think I felt a little sad and awkward — and a little embarrassed about how I looked. And I think I also felt in a way that I let down Isabel...like, I had this great opportunity

to come live in the U.S. and I felt like she saw me and maybe thought I was wasting it in a way, 'cause I'm not healthy.

Laurie: And then Isabel told us that Josefa — who's a year younger than you — already had a job. She was working in a bar.

Diego: Yeah. My older brother Juan was working too, selling wood he got from the mountain.

Laurie: Yeah, I think her point was that they were helping her make ends meet. And then she asked if you were working.

Diego: I told her I was still in school. But I was pretty uncomfortable.

Laurie: Were you uncomfortable 'cause you were still in school and not working?

Diego: I think 'cause I was fat. [Laughs.]

Laurie: [Laughs.]

Diego: Some of it had to do with seeing Juan and seeing him being so lean and so in shape from all the hard work he was doing. And there I was, I felt like...very ashamed and embarrassed in a way, because I felt like I wasn't...like, that was like who I *could* be. And I looked at myself and I was like, *This is what I am*.

Laurie: That makes total sense.

Diego: There's one thing I really wanted to know, though. Where I got the last names that were on my birth certificate: Xicay and Petzey.

Fifteen-year-old Diego: What does Petzey mean?

Dolores: Petzey?

Fifteen-year-old Diego: Petzey. Like Xicay Petzey, what does that mean?

Dolores and Isabel: [Speaking Tzutujil.]

Dolores: Xicay, that's her father.

Laurie: Xicay.

Dolores: Xicay.

Isabel: [Speaking Tzutujil.]

Dolores: Petzey, that's her mother's last name.

Fifteen-year-old Diego: What's Xicay mean in English?

Dolores: Xicay is like a bundle of little sticks. Xicay.

Fifteen-year-old Diego: And then what's Petzey mean?

Dolores: Petzey — it's the taste of the ocean...it's like salt.

Fifteen-year-old Diego: That's awesome.

Laurie: [Laughs.] Le gusta.

Laurie: So do you remember how it felt to learn the meaning of your names?

Diego: It was kind of relieving in a way because I finally had, like, what I felt were my real names — my true names.

Laurie: Well, you know, we gave you Diego Mack Xicay Luke so you could have a piece of your biological names. And a piece of our family too. I mean, Mack was for my grandfather, and Dan's last name is Luke. Every name was intentional — intended to give you a choice what to call yourself.

Diego: Yeah, I know. It just feels like such a conqueror type of name. Diego sounds like it comes from Spain. Mack is pretty white. And Luke is definitely white. So...I've always felt like I've had, like, this white name...um, that just doesn't fit me. It's not who I am.

MUSIC: An electronic synth melody filled with wonder fades in and out.

Diego: When you came back from Guatemala, things seemed easier at home.

Laurie: Seriously?

Diego: Um...I think they seemed better? [Laughs.]

Laurie: Do you remember why?

Diego: I mean, I think going back to Santiago Atitlan, and seeing my birth family, I was able to see how they were as a family.

I just remember going there and seeing, like, how happy they were. And how their appreciation for life and family...it wasn't something they really took for granted.

Laurie: You and me and Dan were there as our little family. And I mean, I think you could feel that we were on your side.

Diego: And I think one of the things that Isabel has always told me is, like, love your parents. And she calls you my parents. And she expects that I will respect you. That's what really made us decide to keep trying...

Laurie: Work it out.

Diego: Right.

Laurie: Did you miss me?

Diego: No. [Laughs.]

Laurie: [Laughs.]

Diego: I mean, yeah, I missed you, but it was also kind of nice because we could just order food and leave dishes out and do all sorts of guy things.

Laurie: I enjoyed not having the tension of you guys too.

Diego: Right.

Laurie: But in the end I missed you more than I liked my freedom, and I was willing to give you more space and ask for more space.

Diego: And you know, that trip to Guatemala had an impact. It got under my skin in a way it never did when I was a little kid. I think it reminded us of this journey that we're on together. It gave us more pieces to my story.

Laurie: Like your names. Especially Xicay, which you've started using more and more.

MUSIC: A flute lullaby fades in and out.

Diego: I think it's okay to have a name that's unique and hard to pronounce. And how I explain it to people is it means like, a bundle of sticks. And I explain it to them, referencing *Planet of the Apes*, where Caesar takes a stick, and it's just a single stick, and he breaks it easily. And then he picks up a bundle of them and then tries to break 'em. He says, *Ape together, strong together*. Right? And it's this sense that, like, I feel like this is a strong name of my people that has lasted for thousands of years.

Diego: So yeah, Xicay. It feels right.

Laurie: Okay, Xicay, we'll be right back.

ACT TWO

Diego: So when we left off with adoption in Guatemala, they had shut everything down. Only the U.S. was still in the game.

Laurie: Yeah, starting January 1st, 2008 no new international adoptions were allowed. About 3,000 U.S. cases had been in process when the law changed.

You know at first, it seemed like no big deal — the U.S. and Guatemala had agreed to settle the cases quickly.

Diego: But then years passed. About 900 cases remained in limbo.

That meant the fate of so many kids still hung in the balance — would they be adopted to the U.S. or would they remain in Guatemala forever?

Laurie: A lot of those families ran out of hope or money. And only about half of the 900 ended up with children being adopted.

Diego, you know, I called several families from the Guatemala 900 and almost all of them declined to talk to us for the podcast. They said they didn't want to revisit the most painful years of their lives.

Diego: But Maggie Hermes and her daughter Vania agreed to share their story.

Vania was born in 2007 — a few months before the shutdown.

Laurie: When I talked to Maggie by video, we were each sitting on the floor in our husband's closets.

Laurie: So Maggie, I'm surprised to see that you and I have the same set-up right now. And I was thinking maybe we could do a husband clothing swap.

Maggie: [Laughs.]

Laurie: Maggie's in her late forties, with blue eyes and long sandy blond hair. She looks like an athlete. And she told me Vania likes to join her on long runs on the weekends.

Laurie: Just...I don't know if you call it irony, but the idea that you chose Guatemala so that you could bring home a little baby and instead, how old was she?

Maggie: She was five years and 10 months old when she finally walked through the door of our house. A whole life had gone on in the interim. And it was a hard process for us, of course, but it was infinitely harder on her.

Diego: When Vania was born, Maggie already had two biological children. But she and her husband wanted a big family. They had always planned to adopt.

Laurie: Yeah, and they wanted a baby because — you know, who doesn't love a baby? And they'd done the same research I had. Babies might be hard in the short-term, but they're less likely to have adjustment problems later. And they wanted to move quickly — so, that's why they chose Guatemala.

Diego: Vania was born in September, and the law creating the shutdown passed in December. But Maggie's adoption agency told her the change in Guatemalan law wouldn't apply to Vania. Maggie shouldn't worry. Her case would make it through.

Maggie: And I think we put too much trust in that. Our initial attorneys claimed that they, um, could not find our file. And that they would need a certain amount of money in order to find it again. That money was paid, the file was found and they were fired. And at that point we switched to a second attorney and this attorney had kind of stepped into the breach and was really helping families who had gotten stuck in this limbo.

MUSIC: An inquisitive marimba begins.

Diego: But Maggie said she and other prospective parents noticed the Guatemalan government was operating differently. She thought maybe it was trying to keep adoptions from going through.

Maggie: The first change that I recall was that they began requesting additional birth mother interviews.

Laurie: Why?

Maggie: To try to convince birth mothers to rescind their placement of the child and to take the child back. And there were attempts to contact, like, external family members and things like that. So to really try to keep the child in its biological family of origin, by any means necessary. And part of me really does sympathize with that impulse. And I don't see it as entirely misguided but, um, I also think it doesn't really give agency to birth mothers or respect that they may have made this as a well-reasoned choice and not under coercion.

Diego: Vania's birth mother completed DNA tests and appeared in family court twice to give her consent in early 2008. But she did not appear when asked to come in for a third interview. So the government said it would not approve the adoption.

You know, officially, those additional interviews were the Guatemalan government's way of giving birth mothers a chance to reclaim their children. And when we spoke to the government, they said they did not coerce birth mothers in their decisions.

Laurie: But we also spoke to four people who witnessed these interviews. And they're adamant that government officials shamed and berated birth mothers. To "persuade" them to take their children back.

MUSIC: An inquisitive marimba fades out.

Maggie: It began to feel that there was an intent to disrupt and to terminate these adoptions. So it began, at this point, to feel more adversarial.

Laurie: Because her adoption wasn't approved, Vania's fate was in limbo for five years. During that time, Maggie visited Vania every few months.

Laurie: And so who were you to Vania? Were you her mom?

Maggie: I did not really address that too much with Vania at the beginning. I was very concerned about over-promising and not being able to deliver on it. And so...I desperately wanted to be able to become her mother. But I had children and no matter what, I would be a mother, I was a mother. If this adoption did not finalize, while heartbreaking, it would not un-mother me. But for Vania, I was kind of it.

MUSIC: Reflective trumpet and slow strings build with mysteriousness fades in.

Laurie: Diego — what Maggie said about that undercurrent of fear in Guatemala? Guatemalans told me about it, too.

Especially in those years after the shutdown, prosecutors were scrutinizing adoption paperwork and sending people to prison.

Diego: Yeah, for child trafficking. The pendulum had swung all the way toward the crackdown and every adoption was suspect.

Laurie: But the U.S. government mostly stayed out of it. So Maggie and her husband, like other 900 families, they lobbied Congress. They held rallies. They worked with local reporters to keep their situation in the news.

Diego: But one thing finally worked. When their Guatemalan lawyers invoked the Guatemalan Constitution. Because one of the rights it affords all children is a right to a family.

Maggie: And we ultimately made the case, that it was unconstitutional to deny a child a right to a family. And if they were ruled abandoned and there was no waiting family in Guatemala, then a U.S. family was the only...the only real option to restore the rights to that child.

Diego: That argument — that children have the right to a family — that worked for some of the 900 families.

Laurie: But for those babies whose cases didn't get underway until *after* the shutdown — for them, the law is clear. Only Guatemalans can adopt Guatemalans. Even if that means a child might go longer without a family.

MUSIC: Reflective trumpet and slow strings build with mysteriousness ends

Laurie: Diego, I mean, what do you think about it? Should Guatemala have tried harder to keep you?

Diego: If the whole point of adoption is to save the kid, would people be willing to put down \$25,000 to a birth family? Like give it directly to Isabel? Like how much would that have helped Guatemala as a country kind of come out of this civil war versus, *We're going to save the babies and leave a bunch of people in poverty still.*

Laurie: You know, I've asked myself that question a lot. I mean, back in 1999 and to this day. And because I think, you know, there's a way to look at it that if I were a better person, I would have given \$20,000 to Guatemala, like you just said. But I wanted a baby.

Diego: Right. But also, it's crazy to think that my fate and Vania's and kids born after 2008 all depend on what the law says and who's interpreting it.

Like "right to a family" — that meant international adoption was okay for me — debatable for Vania — and it's impossible now.

Diego: So finally, Guatemalan authorities said Maggie and her husband could bring Vania to Texas. And in 2013, they did. She was almost six.

When I talked to her, she was 14, and I asked her what she remembered about leaving Guatemala.

Vania: Um, I was very scared. Just transferring to a new life and to a new family. And I was really sad that I was going to move just because, like, I lived there for my whole life and I was going to miss my foster family, but I was somewhat kind of happy. Um, the moves the plane ride was like, I don't know, there's no going back.

Diego: Vania was old enough to go to school when she came, but she took a year off to practice English and get settled in a suburb of Austin, Texas.

And when she finally went to school in the US, it was really different.

Vania: If I needed to go to the restroom at ask the teacher for like toilet paper and stuff in here, I can just go and there's toilet paper that can have, and then there would be like, um, a snack time where there was, like, cafeteria ladies that brought stuff to us. And here we bring our own food, kind of thing.

Diego: Unlike me, Vania remembers when she joined her new family. She says she loves her siblings and her parents. She told me she's proud to be adopted. She feels special because of it.

MUSIC: Forward and bittersweet acoustic guitar arpeggio begins.

Vania: It's a very tough experience just because you're transferring a different life — like this life and then that life.

And it's also, it's pretty happy too, and can be happy, that you can go somewhere else and live with like new people. And they're going to be your new family.

Diego: Maggie says it's still hard. Vania has a way of testing relationships.

Maggie: It...it feels to me sometimes like we're just on a cycle of self-destructive behavior that pushes people away and a lack of...a lack of trust that will allow for healthy connection. Um, there's this like, *Come closer, let me push you away* kind of cycle that we're on.

Diego: Come closer, let me push you away. That's something I know all too well. It's hard to make connections. And maybe that is an adoptee thing. You know, like, it can be really isolating, despite, you know, having really supportive parents.

You don't have perspective on your family at that age. I didn't.

Laurie: You know, I think as a parent, the important thing is to keep showing up for you. Dan and I always tried to do that. I mean, we tried to give you a landing pad no matter how wacky you got. There was a safe place for you to come.

Diego: I knew that no matter what I did, you would always be there.

Maggie: My biggest hope for her is that she will one day feel as entitled to the love of a family as my other kids seem to feel. Um...

Laurie: You don't think she does.

Maggie: I don't think she does. No. No, I think she's still got a part of her that thinks this is something that could all come to an end.

MUSIC: Forward and bittersweet acoustic guitar arpeggio ends.

Diego: Stay with us.

AD BREAK

ACT THREE**Hockey sticks and blades on ice, fans cheering...**

Diego: I started playing hockey again my junior year of high school. It had been almost five years.

Hockey sticks and blades on ice, fans cheering...

Diego: I think probably one of the most proud moments for me was just hearing my name being called again and feeling, like, the air when you're skating. Body-checking people. That was the place where I could just, like, take out all the anger I'd had for five years and just level some kid.

Laurie: [Laughs.]

Diego: And I could also, be confident. Like, yeah, I'm back here, I'm doing my thing. And I'm just having fun. It was, like, one of the first times I genuinely felt happy for those, like, five, six years was...was when I was back skating.

Laurie: And for us, it was...it was, um, you know, it was the beginning of the rest of your life. It was a sign that you were done being a sick kid.

Diego: Yeah, but I needed to do a lot to get back into it, I mean. I lost a lot of motivation when I was going through chemo and hockey kind of reignited a little bit of that fire. I think playing made me realize that I needed to take control of my life.

Laurie: And when we saw you take control of your life, I think we knew to step back and let you find your own way. I had learned from, for example, force-feeding you Spanish lessons that that didn't work, that you had to find your own path

Diego: So I decided to get in shape. And I was like, all right, I'm gonna watch this, um, Superman movie, uh, *Man of Steel*.

MUSIC: Epic orchestral textures with ominous piano begins.

Diego: And there is a scene where, you know, he's saving people. Superman's absolutely shredded. And I just, like, paused it and I sit back and I'm just like, *I want to look like that*.

Uh, so I did some research on how Henry Cavill prepared for the role of Superman. I looked at his diet, I looked at, um, weight training and I kind of implemented that into my own regimen.

There's actually a science to getting stronger. It has to do with loading your muscles with heavier and heavier weights and pushing beyond your, your boundaries — pushing beyond your limits. It's both mental and physical.

MUSIC: Epic orchestral textures with ominous piano ends.

Diego: And it's the resistance that builds strength and endurance.

MUSIC: An inquisitive marimba begins.

Laurie: I think what I realize now is that by resisting me, us, you know, what we thought was best — and by figuring yourself out. It's like you were building muscle mass. And what I mean by that is, like, your own character, your own path.

Diego: But you know, honestly, I don't know what I would've done with myself. You know? Like, I was a problem child. And I do kind of think about it a lot. Like...how would I have parented myself? [Laughs.]

Laurie: The more you took on for yourself, the less I felt like I had to put on you.

MUSIC: An inquisitive marimba ends.

Diego: Yeah. I mean, I can think of an example from high school. I'd been accepted into this group of kids at school — Latino kids.

And they were all really proud of where they were from. They'd hang out together, eat lunch, speak Spanish. And I hung out with them, even though I still felt like an outsider.

Laurie: So what changed?

Diego: One day I just, like, sat down and asked my friend. I was like, *Does it bother you that I don't speak Spanish?* And she was just like, *No, you're from Guatemala.* I think I kind of realized at that point it was just like...like even if I don't speak the language that doesn't change where I'm from, like my place of birth, that's just part of who I am.

I had done everything to kind of not be a part of this group, to be as white as I could. And then I was faced with this realization that *Yeah, I mean, I guess I'm from Guatemala.* I guess this is a group that I will always belong to. No matter what I try to do to separate myself from it. So I was just like, *Fuck it. I guess I'll learn Spanish.*

I mean, when I was like, *Okay, I will learn Spanish. I'll accept that I'm from Guatemala. Like, I'm not really going to push back on these things.* It was kind of like...like I could breathe. It was so refreshing. It was just...

MUSIC: Reflective, beautiful picked acoustic guitar and piano begins.

Laurie: What do you mean?

Diego: It's...it's like when I go running with the 40 pounds and then I come home and take it off, I could go run again. 'Cause it's so...I'm not carrying around this, like, weight.

Laurie: But the funny thing about learning Spanish, it was such a fight for so long. And like, so what does it even add up to? It's not even the language that Isabel speaks. Like, even if we were fluent, we'd still have to go through Dolores to talk to Isabel.

Diego: Yeah, but I think fighting Spanish was just more about a brown kid who didn't feel like he fit in anywhere.

Like here, people will come up and talk to me in Spanish and they've always done that. So now I'm kind of embracing it. It's kind of cool! You know, not everyone can speak both languages. Not everyone is seen as having two cultures.

Laurie: So now, you have this grownup perspective, but is there a part of you that wishes you, you'd figured this out sooner? Like you hadn't put up so much resistance?

Diego: No, because I don't think I could have gotten here any sooner. I had so much to push back on, and my sickness took away so much time from me. My identity as a Guatemalan, as an adoptee — I just didn't have time for that. Because by the time I was getting curious about it, I was fighting for my life. So adoption was on the back burner. But it all kind of made me a stronger person. 'Cause I really did have to figure this stuff out on my own.

Laurie: So now you feel like you're ready to or want to focus on your own history?

Diego: Yeah I think so. I'm on the other side of the hardest things — surviving...and then finding my way to really living again. So I'm ready to face it now.

MUSIC: Reflective, beautiful picked acoustic guitar and piano begins and ends.

Laurie: So in early 2022, we were planning another trip to Guatemala. But this time you were the one calling the shots. For the most part.

Diego: Yeah, and that meant I wanted to try and see my birth father — Cristobal — this time.

But also top of my list was to claim my place as a Guatemalan — officially. If paperwork made me *your* kid, and an American, then it should work in reverse, and make me Guatemalan, too.

Laurie: Yeah, Guatemala even says if you were born there, you can be a citizen. You just needed government approval. Like when we adopted you!

Diego: So that brought me to the CNA. The Consejo Nacional de Adopciones.

Laurie: It was founded in 2008, right after the shutdown. Because while *international* adoption was over, Guatemalans could still adopt. And the CNA is like the one-stop shop for that.

Diego: Yeah, I mean, if you go to their website, you can see it all laid out. There's one tab if you're pregnant and you want to relinquish your baby. And another tab if you want to adopt.

And then there's this one last tab: it has two couples. One has an orange brown skin and is wearing traditional clothing. And the other has pale skin. I'm pretty sure that's probably you and Dan.

Laurie: [Laughs.] Yeah, I think you're probably right.

THEME MUSIC: An uplifting and inspiring electronic beat begins with a strong guitar underneath begins softly.

Diego: The caption below says "Busqueda de origines." Search your origins. They say they can help adoptees like me establish dual citizenship. It's funny, the three tabs — these cute little icons — it really made it look pretty straightforward.

Laurie: Yeah, like, just press here and all the mess will be resolved — poof. Well, you know what? We did press here. But it wasn't. When you clicked through to "search your origins" and tried to get your new paperwork as a citizen...well...

Diego: Yeah, the mess just got messier.

Laurie: Yeah, things I thought I knew were wrong. Things that mattered to you. To us.

Diego: And to clear things up this time — and for good — I'd need to go to the source.

THEME MUSIC: Swells with intensity and fades out.

MUSIC: Bright piano and guitar with synths pulsing with discovery begins.

Diego: Next time, on All Relative: Defining Diego...

Diego: I've always been hesitant to call myself Guatemalan in a way.

Dolores: She says she's proud of you. You're the son of Isabel and you feel this feeling of community as an indigenous person.

Laurie: What place are they registering as the place where you were born?

Diego: Escuintla.

Laurie: That's not what we waited nine months for the form to say.

Diego: I think there's always going to be a discrepancy and I don't think we're ever really going to know where I was actually born.

Diego: I'm very interested to meet him because even though he may be a bad person or something like this, I think he deserves to have his side of the story.

MUSIC: Bright piano and guitar with synths pulsing with discovery ends.

AD BREAK

THEME MUSIC: A soft, acoustic, stripped down version of the theme begins.

Diego: All Relative: Defining Diego is a production of Somethin' Else and Sony Music Entertainment.

Laurie: It's written and hosted by me, Laurie Stern.

Diego: And me — Diego Xicay Luke.

Laurie: Mia Warren is our senior producer.

Diego: Associate producers are India Witkin and Kyra Assibey-Bonsu.

Laurie: Executive producers are Lizzie Jacobs, Jude Kampfner, and Tom Koenig.

Diego: Lizzie Jacobs is our editor.

Laurie: Production management help from Ike Egbetola and Lily Hambly.

Diego: Dara Hirsch is our engineer. And we had additional mixing by Sam Bair. Our theme song was composed by Gautam Srikishan.

Laurie: Fact-checking by Natsumi Ajisaka.

Diego: Translation by Dolores Ratzan.

Laurie: Our adoptee consultant is Erik Mohn.

Diego: And special thanks to my dad, Dan Luke, you're the man.

Laurie: Dan, we love you.

Diego: If you loved the show, follow us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, Stitcher or wherever you get your podcasts.

THEME MUSIC: A soft, acoustic, stripped down version of the theme ends.

CITATION

Stern, Laurie and Luke, Diego Xicay. "Resist and Release." *All Relative: Defining Diego*, Somethin' Else and Sony Music Entertainment. www.sonymusic.com/podcasts

Produced by Sony Music Entertainment and Somethin' Else

