



# Cultural Immersion: Exploring Dominican Bachata with Carlos Cinta

## Episode 19

This week, we're continuing our theme of cultural immersion in our conversation with Carlos Cinta. Carlos is dance instructor, DJ, and music editor. He's most known in the dance community for his expertise in musicality, especially when it comes to Bachata music from the Dominican Republic and staying true the genre's roots.

He's not known for biting his tongue and definitely doesn't shy away from controversy in this conversation. We talk about everything from how he became so passionate about Bachata to cultural appropriation.

He also shares who is his favorite Bachata artist and talks about a unique opportunity if you want to learn more about the Dominican Republic and be completely immersed in the culture.

Time	Speaker	Transcript
00:32 – 01:48	Host	<p>Hola y bienvenidos a Episodio 19. Welcome to episode 19 of the Learn Spanish Con Salsa podcast. Last week we talked about a full cultural immersion experience with Latin music, dance, travel, and more with the director of Aventura Dance Cruise.</p> <p>Now this week we're continuing our theme of cultural immersion in our conversation with Carlos Cinta. Now I caught up with Carlos at the Baltimore Salsa Bachata Congress and he is a dance instructor, DJ and music editor. He's most known in the dance community for his expertise in musicality, especially when it comes to Bachata music from the Dominican Republic and staying true to the genre's roots. He is definitely not known for biting his tongue and he does not shy away from controversy.</p> <p>In this conversation, we talk about everything from how he became so passionate about Bachata to cultural appropriation. He also shows who is his favorite Bachata artist and he talks about a unique opportunity if you want to learn more about the Dominican Republic and become completely immersed in the culture, meet the people and learn more about the music. I hope you enjoy this conversation with Carlos Cinta. Vamos a empezar.</p>

		Carlos, thank you for joining me on the Learn Spanish Con Salsa podcast. <i>Let's get started.</i>
01:48-01:49	Carlos	Thank you. Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.
01:49-01:56	Host	I want to just start out for our listeners that may not know you, can you tell us just a little bit about yourself and your background, where you grew up?
01:56-02:21	Carlos	Alright. Well, I'm Carlos Cinta. I'm from Chicago. I focus more when I teach Bachata, I'm teaching more about the musicality, about movement, you know, teaching people how to move their bodies and be more playful when they're dancing, to try to get away from counting music and instead of, and understanding what's happening more so they can feel the music when they're dancing. So that's just more my specialty, my bread and butter.
02:21-02:28	Host	And so for -- just to clear up a misconception, because I know some people that do know you, they think that you are Dominican, but what is your background actually?
02:28-02:40	Carlos	Yeah. So my mother is Mexican and my dad is from Ghana. And it's funny, even though I tell people that I'm not Dominican, they just refuse to believe me. It's like, "No, I'm telling you I'm not Dominican." "Yes, you are."
02:40-02:43	Host	Okay. Well alright. You get to be, you know, you're an honorary Dominican.
02:43-02:51	Carlos	I will. I'm honorary Dominican, Puerto Rican, Caribbean. Yeah. Um, but, I'm not, I'm not.
02:51-03:01	Host	So since you, you're from Chicago and you said, so you're Mexican and your dad is from Ghana, so how did you become so involved with Bachata music and Dominican culture?
03:01-03:57	Carlos	You know in 2009 when I was living in San Diego, 'because you know, San Diego is a big military town, so there's a lot of Caribbean people there stationed there for military and just hanging out at the Dominican club a lot. And we would always on Saturday night and then Sundays we would all go to the park and play softball together. So just hanging around the people of the culture was a new experience.  And then, you know, seeing how they party to their music and the type of songs that they listen to. You know, just then it was just loud and screaming and talking and yelling and just having fun and you know, that's, that's kind of more, you know, the culture that I like and I feel comfortable in. So it was just fun hanging around them.

		And then in 2010 I went to the Dominican Republic for the first time and really got to see the culture firsthand and then, you know, the way of life and how people were. It was really nice, you know? And I just fell in love with it.
03:57-04:10	Host	So what is it about the culture exactly that you connected with. You said you had friends, you connect with the music, but when you went there, what was different about that that really made you connect more with the culture of the Dominican Republic?
04:10-04:40	Carlos	They're really warm people and very welcoming, very inviting. The culture, again, it's a lot about music, live music, party, fiestas, a lot of food is involved. And then there's sports, there's baseball. I'm a baseball fan, so I grew up playing it. And so we have food, music, sports for me is-- those are my three go-tos and that's what they do a lot on the island. The food is awesome, very fresh. And you've got the beach, if you like the beach. It's just, it's just a really cool place. I like it.
04:40-04:56	Host	What's one of the biggest misconceptions you think people have about the Dominican Republic? So for people who haven't been there and it might just kind of know from what they hear in the media or from what people say do, what do you think is one of those misconceptions out there about the people that live there that you would want to clear up?
04:56-05:52	Carlos	<p>You know, it is a third world country that's true, but there's so many beautiful places, waterfalls so much, so much. There's so much beautiful nature out there. You go there and you experience different things.</p> <p>You know, people, coming from concrete jungles and cities and cars and Uber's and this and that. And then you go over there and you know, you're walking, you're on the bus, you know, they call them little <i>guaguas</i>. So you're not on a big Greyhound bus. It looks like a little, like the the Scooby-Doo, the Scooby Mobile or whatever. They have buses too. You know, a lot of them know that you're on a little Scooby-Doo Mobile or you're on the little, they call them <i>motoconchos</i>, you're on the little-- looks like a little dirt bike, kind of their taxis and how they get around and it's like, or you're on horseback.</p> <p>You know, so I'm not going to lie, me getting on a horse was very awkward and everybody's just laughing at me and I was just like, " Look man, I don't know how to get on a horse."</p>
05:52-05:54	Host	Not too many horses in Chicago.
05:54-06:43	Carlos	Not too many horses, no. So yeah, it was just different. But again, there's a lot of cool experiences and you -- what I like is that you learn to appreciate what you do have when you come back to a first world country.

		<p>For example, electricity for example hot water, you know, you're able to drink the water from the sink over here, where you can't do that over there or it's discouraged. So Internet, Wi-Fi, you know, again, first world problems. But yeah, but it over there, you know, you really, it's kind of one of those, "Oh the Internet's not going to work today."</p> <p>You put the phone down and you instead of looking down and you see what's in front of you and it's like wow, there's all this beautiful nature and life in front of you and you pay attention to that. And it's like, man, this, this isn't bad. This isn't bad.</p>
06:43-07:00	Host	<p>And I know for me too. I know when I visited Dominican Republic, I noticed like you mentioned, people are just warm and even despite all of that, like everyone is still in a good mood and having to get time. Not that there's not challenges, but like you said, it's like, okay, well the Wi-Fi is down, let's go party. Like it's not going to stop people from enjoying themselves and having a good time.</p>
07:00-07:10	Carlos	<p>And over here the Wi-Fi is down it's like, "Oh, come on, where are you going to do now?" "Go outside." "Go outside? It's too hot, it's too cold. It's too this. It's too that." So yeah, first world problems.</p>
07:10-07:28	Host	<p>Switching gears a little bit, I want to talk specifically about Bachata. So for those who may not be familiar with -- maybe they, you know, more familiar with Salsa, maybe they know about like Marc Anthony and those types of artists. Could you talk a little bit about what is Bachata music and what actually, you know, makes Bachata what it is?</p>
07:28-08:55	Carlos	<p>I think Bachata is more -- it's a lifestyle. It's a culture. Again, this is just my opinion, but you know, from what I've seen in my experiences, going over there, it's struggle, but at the same time it's heartache. It's happiness. It's joy. It's peace. You know, you get all of the emotions. Sometimes you just see at the discos grown men crying, like crying, but you know from songs remind them of a certain woman that left him or something like that. And then at the same time, the next time you could see everybody party, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, you know, just having a good time. So it's a rollercoaster of emotions, but it's more than just step, step, step, tap.</p> <p>You know, it's a lifestyle on it. It is life. They live and breathe it. And again, not to be clear, not all Dominicans like Bachata and it's not -- they still, you know, have some reservations, but it's also, from what I've been told, more of a capital type thing, meaning in Santo Domingo is more, or further south on the island. But I'm sure it's everywhere. I haven't been everywhere all over the island, but it's just so it's a way of life, not a way to make money or to travel the world.</p>

08:55-09:37	Host	<p>Could you tell us a little bit about sort of where Bachata came from? So you mentioned the experience of being in DR and going to parties where we see people where one song is very joyous. Then one song might be very sad.</p> <p>But then when you sort of hear Bachata as it's become this worldwide phenomenon and you hear it all over the world. I know I had an exchange student from Spain a few years ago and she actually told me that she listened to Romeo Santos, and I was shocked. I was like, wow, this little island in the Caribbean has created this culture that's gone around the entire world.</p> <p>But what is sort of the difference between what people may have been introduced to and more modern Bachata or Bachata as it's become more popular versus sort of the origins in the roots of the music and the feeling behind it when it first started?</p>
09:37-12:27	Carlos	<p>I think the sound is different. It depends on where you're at and where you party will depend on kind of what sound do you hear or what sound they force feed you.</p> <p>But in the industry that I work in, a lot of music that is played for the people, for the masses, is more music engineered by DJs and music that is engineered by producers, not necessarily Bachata artists, so that sound is basically completely stripped down of all the original elements of the Bachata instruments, which we would have the bongo, the güira, the bass guitar, the second guitar, the lead guitar. A lot of those instruments are stripped down to make this sound more pleasing to somebody that's not familiar with the culture, somebody that's never been there or somebody that's just not Caribbean at all. Again, to appeal to the masses and, again, it's business, so it is what it is.</p> <p>I find that in doing so you're appropriating the Dominican culture and you're stripping all of its history and all of its roots, but still giving it the same title and the same label, which is where I think the problem is. I would say the product isn't the problem, it's the labeling of the product. You know, if you go, I don't know, to buy orange juice and it's labeled orange juice but you get apple juice, you're not going to be happy. Not that you don't like apple juice, but the labeling, I wanted orange juice and you gave me apple, that's not okay.</p> <p>So the songs recorded before and the songs mainly being recorded in the island, I think there's more emphasis on the lead guitar more, what they would consider "Mambo" sessions towards a lot more music just jamming like a</p>

		<p>freestyle jam session. That is more prevalent in the music that comes more from the artists from the island to where the songs recorded off the island.</p> <p>A lot of stuff's been in New York, Europe, wherever it's recorded because there's more R and B and Hip-Hop influence and just American pop culture influence. They don't put a lot of emphasis on the lead guitar it's more on the bass guitar. More sound effects, a lot smoother feeling, again to make it more I guess palatable for the ear as opposed to the more twangy or higher pitch sound of the stuff that comes from the island.</p> <p>So that's just the differences in the music. And people will say, "Well you know what, music is evolving, the music is changing." And I said, well technically true, but the way that they mean it is incorrect because the music isn't changing. Again, DJs and producers are changing the music and that is something that is completely different and I don't feel that that's fair to the Dominican culture because you're stripping away all the instruments and all the feeling and still giving it the same title.</p>
12:27-12:58	Host	<p>Right. And you know, I was going to ask you about this too, because I know I've heard it mentioned a few times when I've been out dancing even where people will say, oh that that's like Dominican Bachata or like traditional Bachata. There're all these other labels. There are all these sub genres people have created for the music. And there's some people who I know who have told me, "Oh, I don't want to dance to that traditional or that Dominican stuff because it's all this footwork and I can't do all of that."</p> <p>Could you talk about that? Is there a divide in the dance community over that?</p>
12:58-14:47	Carlos	<p>There is a very huge divide in the dance community. For business purposes I feel what is sold, and I put sold in air quotes, what is sold to a lot of people is that, again, quote unquote Dominican Bachata is footwork and you know, it's all footwork, it's just unfortunate because -- and then the two main stereotypes is the music is super-fast and the footwork syncopations are really tricky and really fast.</p> <p>And in the parties, again, a lot of DJs will play a quote unquote, Dominican songs. So they think I have to put a song, you know, 160 bpm or faster. And so if you've got the fastest song on the planet plus the most complicated syncopated footwork sequence on the planet, and you try to do them together. It's not going to work.</p> <p>So people get discouraged and then they leave and "I'm just going to -- that stuff is stupid. I don't like that." And then they just build this wall. But it's just</p>

		<p>that it hasn't been introduced to people properly. You know? Again, they're sold at, it's all this flash and tricks, but it's not, it's about movement.</p> <p>It's about playfulness, enjoying the music. There are slow songs. There were medium tempo songs, there's fast songs, but those, you know, again, the slower ones are never played because there is this myth that I have to play something fast, so it's just if they would learn it properly or if DJs would play the music properly, then I think that people would be more open to it.</p> <p>I always tell people, you know, go to just the regular Latin club or go to a Dominican club or whatever and just see if -- you need to be, to really understand it. You need to be around the people and the culture. You need to be in the beep with the people. I don't know if that's, you know, family. I beeped myself.</p>
14:47-14:50	Host	I appreciate your self-beeping.
14:50-15:53	Carlos	<p>You need to be in it with the people to really understand what it is to them and then they go, "Ohhh, okay!" Appreciation. Appreciation comes with understanding. If you don't understand something, you're not going to appreciate it.</p> <p>If you don't understand what goes into making tamales, enchiladas, you know, whatever. But when you sit there and you make it and there's a big pile of masa and that stuff takes seven hours, eight hours, you'd be like, "Oh, I'll never again, like I appreciate the hard work."</p> <p>There's -- people don't understand American football. "That's just guys hitting each other. That sport's stupid." But you know, I play and I coach it, so I understand all the strategy that goes into it. It's like, no, it's more than that. But now if you have just, you know, the basic understanding or somebody explains you the rules and they were like, "Oh, okay, well now I understand it. Now I appreciate it a little bit more."</p> <p>Not saying that you have to be 100% enthusiast, but just have a little bit of understanding of what it is to the people of the culture and then you may appreciate it a little bit more.</p>
15:53-18:03	Host	You know, you make a good point because that's something that I share with people.

		<p>So, because I've been to the Dominican Republic as well a few times, and I've been to Santo Domingo, Puerto Plata, Santiago. So even within the island, there's differences in the culture.</p> <p>But one thing I did notice, and I shared it with people when I came back, especially a lot of the dancers will learn Bachata in a studio. And they're like, "Oh you know, one, two, tap and you know, they're very focused on that and doing all these body rolls and dips and I tell them, "You know, I went to DR and nobody dances like that." Not only does what you're doing not look like anything that they're doing, but all this like, "Oh I need to have my dance shoes and I need to make sure of this. And the floor is like, where's the powder?"</p> <p>None of that happened in the DR. People are literally just having fun. They're dancing in whatever conditions. Like you mentioned when you're trying to find Wi-Fi and electricity, you don't have time to make sure you have suede bottoms on your shoes.</p> <p>So there is definitely that disconnect. I think you're right. Until you actually experienced that for yourself, it's really hard for someone to just tell you. Because it's like they're preaching at you like, "Oh you need to--" But you really have to have your own experience. I definitely agree with that.</p> <p>And even like you said, I think there's also a divide between not only just within the dance community, but just the actual community of for instance, there's a Latin club where that's where people actually hang out.</p>
18:03-18:07	Carlos	It all really depends on the mood and the situation.
18:07-18:08	Host	You can think about it.
18:08-20:00	Carlos	<p>That's tough. So I've narrowed it down to -- I have two favorites. And when I say favorites is more like there's one thing to have a good game and then there's one thing to be like Jordan where like every game is going to be either really great or better than everybody else's good.</p> <p>You know, so like pound for pound for me, the goat/greatest of all time is Raúlín Rodríguez. He's just mad because he's got so many albums and each one of those albums there are more than half of the songs on there are just good. That's -- sometimes people have albums, two songs are good. The rest are eh. The majority of his albums, well with all of his albums, the majority of the songs like, "Oh my gosh, that's a banger. Ooh, another banger, wowie listen to this one." So, so many of them. And so I think it's more than</p>

		<p>consistency, right? Like one album isn't trash and another one is good. Like the consistency of consistently putting out great hits. For me he's my favorite.</p> <p>I'm a big Luis Miguel del Amargue fan. I think he goes overlooked a lot. Seeing him live, he's my favorite one that I've seen live. I haven't seen everybody, I haven't seen Raulín live, but of the people that I've seen live, he's just, again, his songs are, a lot of them are just danceable, you know, really good songs, really good, lyrics, good composition. It's just, I love his music too.</p> <p>Obviously, you know, you've got Antoni Santo and Luis Vargas. I owe a lot of credit to, you know, Joan Soriano you know for helping me out in my journey with understanding the music and everything. Yeah for my go to, I got to go with Raulín, got to.</p>
20:00-20:29	Host	<p>Yeah, I was curious about that. Talk a little bit about your experience of Joan Soriano.</p> <p>Because I know you've done some work with the school down there in terms of the musicality and in some of the classes that you have available, some of the courses you actually have them break down and they're actually showing the instrument. So people that, you know, even if you're just hearing on the radio, you've never seen these instruments before. I think it's fascinating just being able to see the people who are playing the music and what those instruments look like and watching how it all comes together.</p> <p>So talk a little bit about your experience with the Soriano family.</p>
20:29-21:54	Carlos	<p>Yeah. So, I'm a junkie when it comes to music. I like knowing all the details, again, for me it's just, I like to nerd out with that type of stuff. So being in DR and then seeing the live concerts, I don't really like -- I'm not the biggest fan of dancing as it is, which sounds odd because I teach dance. People still don't believe me.</p> <p>But I love music, so especially if there's a live band, I will be front row just staring at all the musicians, just watching how they play just because it's fascinates me. And then I'll try to watch somebody play and just specifically pick out that sound in the full song with everybody playing, you know, and then I'll just go down the line, you know, musician by musician. And so I feel that that has helped me peel apart all the different layers and being able to hear everything that's happening in the music has made my connection with music grow even deeper and stronger. So now I feel a lot more songs because I'm able to hear everything.</p>

		And so with Soriano, I had the pleasure of meeting him in 2010, and again, just again warn people off, you know him and his band from the island and you know, just being in the hotel room before they would have a concert and they're just, they're junkies, they love to play music. That's what they do.
21:54-21:58	Host	They're music junkies to clarify that.
21:58-23:44	Carlos	<p>Yeah, they're music junkie. So, you know, just watching the tech rehearsals and watching how they, "No, no, you gotta do this, you got to do that. And after I do this, then I want you to come in." Just how they put things together. It's just great. And then, you know, I said, we'll be in a hotel room and leaving in a half hour. Okay, cool. And they're just jamming and just playing their instruments. I was like, wow, this is so fun to watch.</p> <p>But then you know, when you're behind the scenes and you can really see it and you can really hear it when they play live, you know, you're just able to hear everything so much cleaner because it's not one big pile of five instruments together. It's like five individual instruments playing.</p> <p>We did some work together. We did a CD together, a more of a teaching and instructional type CD and DVD; it's called Bachata Breakdown. You can find that on iTunes and there's a CD version of that. And again, it's more of timing CD to help people. Again, we peel apart all the different instrumental layers one at a time to help you really identify, "Okay this is what the instrument is, this is what it sounds like."</p> <p>And then, you know, now I'll try to go identify that instrument in the song and then we made the DVD version of that to where you could actually see the musicians playing in. They explain how they play the music.</p> <p>So that was really awesome for me to be in. Cause now again, I just have such a deeper understanding. It's a blessing and a curse because I can hear every little thing in the music and then it gets distracting when I try to dance because I'm like "Listen, listen, listen to this part, listen to this part, wait listen, listen. Ohh did you hear that?" But, yeah, I'm definitely very fortunate to have met them and been able to work with them on the CD and the DVD.</p>
23:44-24:00	Host	And even heard they give you a shout out in one of their songs. I was listening to "¿Por qué Me Botó?" <i>"Why did she dump me?"</i> I'm like, listening, listening. I'm like, wait a minute, "Did he say Chicago?" I was like, "Oh, Carlos Cinta!" So he's like, "Pa' que la goces Carlos Cinta". <i>Enjoy it, Carlos Cinta.</i> So you got a shout out. That's pretty cool.

24:00- 24:49	Carlos	<p>Yeah. I wasn't ready for that when he showed it to me, I wasn't ready. And that's the one thing I really respect about them is that in a lot of his songs he gives a lot of shout outs to people all over the world, you know, that that help him, are his friends, he's one of those guys that when he does a concert, he will be the last person to leave.</p> <p>He will take a picture with everybody, sign an autograph for everybody. I mean he genuinely appreciates his fans and so it's really awesome just to see him do that. He just shouts out so many people, like there's a guy, like every time they visit a certain city, you know, he just invites all of them over to his house and cooks for him. And he's a chef. He gives him a shout out in the song, you know, 'cause they just appreciate that, you know, he's a really cool dude, man. Really, really good humble guy.</p>
24:49- 25:19	Host	<p>Alright, Carlos, thank you so much for joining me. This has been a great conversation and I hope that anyone out there who's listening, whether or not you're a dancer, you just have a curiosity about, you know, the culture that you really take the time out to do your own research and have your own experiences.</p> <p>And I think this is all part of that really getting to know the people and not just the music itself but the people that make the music. So I really appreciate your time and sharing your experience with us.</p> <p>If folks want to get in touch with you, where can they find you on social media and any events that you have coming up you want to let us know about?</p>
25:19- 27:08	Carlos	<p>Yeah. So on Facebook, just Carlos Cinta, C-I-N-T-A, just my name. I have Instagram. It is CC Bachata. Website is ccbachata.com and there you could find it was just more information, more pictures about what I do, where I'll be at, which festivals.</p> <p>A great event that kind of ties in with this whole interview about being around the people of that culture and seeing it firsthand, I participated in an event called Bachata Paradise in Las Terrenas in DR that happens at the end of May. What is that, Memorial weekend? Yeah. So more holiday. It's a great event honestly, because usually a lot of the festivals you'll go, it'll be -- you'll be in a hotel, you never leave the hotel, you know how the parties, workshops, everything is inside the hotel and, and there's really no time to explore the city. You know, you could be in China, you wouldn't know the difference from the hotel that you're in.</p>

		<p>But this one is a little bit different to where you, of course, you know, you have your workshops at the place. But just for example, like Monday you'll go here and party at this club with the local people. Tuesday you go here and party at this other local club. So really the only tourists are the people that are involved in that event.</p> <p>And it's really, like I said, it's a great cultural immersion. So not only you go see live concerts and you go to the local discos or the local clubs, but there's also excursions, you just beach parties there are -- you go horseback riding, there's waterfalls, there's natural pools and things that you go to to really experience the island, experience the culture so that it's definitely a great, great experience called <a href="http://Bachataparadise.com">Bachataparadise.com</a>. You can look that up.</p>
28:08-27:17	Host	<p>And make sure that you jump on that quickly because I know that's coming up at the end of May. So if you're interested in Bachata Paradise, definitely check that out as well. Alright, thank you Carlos.</p>
27:17-27:23	Carlos	<p>Thank you so much. I appreciate it.</p>
27:23-28:52	Host	<p>I hope you enjoyed that interview. And if you want to find out more about Bachata Paradise, go to our show notes page at <a href="http://learnspanishconsalsa.com/19">learnspanishconsalsa.com/19</a>, that's <a href="http://learnspanishconsalsa.com/19">learnspanishconsalsa.com/19</a>. You'll get all the information about Bachata Paradise which is happening from May 23rd to June 2nd, 2019.</p> <p>Now, if you're listening to this after May 23rd, 2019 and you miss the boat this year not to worry, the event will be happening again in 2020 so if you're interested, go to the website that we have linked in the show notes and make sure you sign up for the list so you'll be notified about the next event.</p> <p>We also have links to the artists that Carlos mentioned in our conversation so you can find their music if you'd like to hear some authentic Bachata from the Dominican Republic.</p> <p>As always, let us know if you liked this episode by leaving us a rating and review in iTunes. It really means a lot to us to know that you're listening and I love to hear your feedback. Click the link in the episode description or on the show notes page. You can also follow us on Instagram at Learn Spanish Con Salsa to give us any comments or suggestions for future episodes.</p> <p>That is it for this episode of Learn Spanish Con Salsa. As always, I hope something that you heard today will take you one step closer from being a Spanish beginner to fully bilingual. Hasta luego.</p> <p><i>Until next time.</i></p>

**Show Notes:** <http://www.learnspanishconsalsa.com/19>

### **Links and Resources**

- [Bachataparadise.com](http://Bachataparadise.com)

### **Guest Information**

- Carlos Cinta
- Website: <https://www.ccbachata.com/>
- Instagram [@CCBachata](https://www.instagram.com/CCBachata)

### **Music**

- Luis Miguel del Amargue - [Playlist](#)
- Raulin Rodriguez - [Playlist](#)
- [¿Por qué me botó?](#) by Joan Soriano