



200th Episode! Eva Longoria Always Knew She'd Succeed

The multi-hyphenate power house opens up about motherhood, divorce and finding her purpose.

-
- Alicia Menendez: Eva Longoria Bastón began her career as an actress, but she always knew that she wanted more. And so she got to work, earning her master's, political organizing, directing, producing, and building the Eva empire. She's got a new podcast on iHeartRadio, Connections With Eva Longoria. Her directorial feature debut, Flamin' Hot, which tells the story of Richard Montanez turning Flamin' Hot Cheetos into a global pop culture phenomenon, is already getting Oscar buzz. And she recorded this interview from Oaxaca where she is filming her new CNN show, Searching for Mexico. Eva gets candid about everything from divorce to motherhood to finding her purpose and why she always knew that no matter what she did, she would find success.
- Menendez: Eva, hello, thank you for doing this.
- Eva Longoria: I've been dying to do your podcast. Like dying. You have so many amazing guests.
- Menendez: I have to tell you how much this means to me. Because when we launched three years ago, everyone kept saying, "Well, you have to get Eva Longoria. You have to get Eva Longoria." And I was like, "The most famous Latina in America is not going to do a podcast with someone she doesn't know that has no following, season one. Like she'll come to us later." And here you are.
- Longoria: I'm here. Honestly, I had been listening to you and then I just didn't have anything to talk about for a long time. I was just like my keep my head down and my feet moving, I was working. And then now I have all this stuff happening and going on, and I was like, "Maybe I should do some podcasts."
- Menendez: Your head is always down and your feet are always walking. And what I want to talk about today is the business of being and becoming get Eva Longoria. And I want you to start by taking me back to your decision to do that scholarship competition beauty pageant, your final year of college. Because I really do think that sets the groundwork for a lot of your story.
- Longoria: Oh my God. Totally. Well, first I'm from Texas. So Texas is about pageants and football. Like that's the thing. I was never a pageant girl. I was already a senior in college. I was like 20 years old. And I ran out of Pell Grants and financial aid, and I couldn't pay for my senior year. And a friend of mine was like, "Why don't you join the scholarship pageant?" And I was like, "Like a beauty pageant?" She's like, "Yeah, but you get a scholar, like you get money if you win. For school." And I was like, "Oh my gosh. Okay."

Longoria: So I looked at the prizes and I was like, "Oh my gosh, if I could just get fourth place." All I wanted was fourth place. Because that was like books. And I was like, okay. And then I entered and I end up winning. And the main prize was tuition books, boarding, a stipend. And I was like, "Oh my God, this is so crazy." But because I won that one, I had to go to another one. I had to go to the next competition. I was like, "Oh God, no, I don't want to keep, I don't want to keep being in beauty pageants." It's like, so but-

Menendez: I just want to take my money and go.

Longoria: Yes, I want to, I'm cashing out. Cashing out. So I got to finish college. And then I had to go to this other pageant, which was Miss Corpus Christi. And then I won that one. And in that prize package was a trip to Los Angeles and I was like, "Huh. Okay, I'll go." I mean, I had just graduated. I was like, "Hey, why not?" And then I got to LA and literally just one day to the next, I was like, "I'm going to be an actress." I mean, never dreamt of it. Never thought of it. Never watched movies. Never had role models of like, I want to be Salma Hayek. Like never, never. I don't know where it came from. It just-

Menendez: You were going to be like an athletic trainer on a sports team.

Longoria: Oh yeah. My dream was to work for the Dallas Cowboys. Like that was my dream was to be a sports trainer for the Dallas Cowboys. And then I had some internships taping ankles for football teams. And I was like, "Yeah, this is gross. I don't want to be around athletes feet all the time." But I really, yeah, my bachelor's degree is in exercise science and kinesiology. I was like, "I'm going to be a physical therapist. I'm going to," I just loved the movement of the body. And I was like super fit and into fitness. And then I just go, "Meh, let's be an actor."

Menendez: I want to underline a piece of this story, which is that, it's confusing now because you are a legendary beauty. But at the time your family, was like-

Longoria: But I wasn't.

Menendez: ... a beauty pageant?

Longoria: Yes. My mom's like, "Is that really a good idea, honey?" And I was like, "Mom, I need a dress." And then my other sister was like, "You need a gown. It's called a gown." Like all my sisters are making fun of me. And I was just like, whatever, the thing with the beads, I don't know. Like I was just la prieta fea, I was the ugly, dark one in my family. They were all laughing that I was even in a pageant. Even to this day, they think it's hilarious that I'm with L'Oreal. They're like, "Okay, you're the beauty standard." Nothing like family to keep you grounded. They didn't value beauty in my family. They weren't, there was the smart one, and there was the funny one, and there was the feisty one or the independent one, and like nobody was there, oh, and she's the pretty one. That just wasn't valued in the women of my family.

Menendez: One of the many ways in which you were super Latina is that you never have one job at a time. So you land in LA, you start working as a head hunter. And I love, you get cast on a soap and you still just keep head hunting.

Longoria: Yes. Because I couldn't make enough money on the soap. But no, when I moved to LA I had a degree. I was just like, "I want to work in an office." And so I went to the temp agency and they hired me. They were like, "Why don't you work here?" And I was like, "What is this?" And they were like, "Oh, it's like match making. There's jobs and people and you put them together." And I was like, "Okay." And I was really good at it. I mean, it was like, no brainer. It was so easy to me. And I was making so much money. And I was like 22

years old making a really good, I had an apartment. I had a car. I could pay for my head shots. I paid for my acting class. So I was not a struggling actor because I was like, I have a nine to five job.

Longoria: And then I would sneak out and go do my auditions. And I would use the company's postage to send out my submissions. I don't know if they know that, but they will now. And so then I got my big break on *Young and the Restless* and it was paying like \$900 a month. I mean, it was something like before taxes. And I was like, "Yeah, I can't live on that. I have an apartment. I have a car. I have insurance." So I would do it out of my dressing room at *Young and the Restless*. And I just kept being a headhunter because I made more money headhunting than I was making acting.

Menendez: Right. But just to build on the pattern here, then you get your actual big break on *Desperate Housewives*, and to complicate matters, and this is where it comes full circle to this idea of beauty not being valued in your family, but education, intellect being valued. You decide you need to go back to school in the middle of filming the biggest show in the world, at that time, to get a master's degree. Because of course.

Longoria: Because I was the underachiever in my family. My mom was like, "Eh, all your sisters have a master's. You don't." And I was like, "Right, but"-

Menendez: Number one in China, whatever.

Longoria: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm mom, "You know people know me in Australia, and India." And she's like, "Right, but you don't have a master's." And so I went back, at the height of *Housewives*. I love academia. And I want to get another master's. I want to get a doctorate. It's like, I really love it. But there's a lot of people that fall into the trap of academia and never apply it in life. And the whole point of me going back to get my master's was to apply it to my activism, and my philanthropy, and really to use that information and go, okay, this is what I've learned now, how can I make sustainable effective change in my community with this information?

Menendez: Which you have done in spades. I mean *Eva's Heroes*, *Latino Victory Project*, *Poderistas*. And as your star rose, did anybody try to pull you back from that? To say the politics aren't worth it?

Longoria: Yeah. Well, yeah. They're like, don't, nobody cares what you have to say. And I was like, I'm not telling people what to think. I'm telling people to think for themselves and to pay attention. And I think when people go, "Eva, you're the voice of the Latino community." I'm not the voice of, I'm not, I don't speak for the Latino community or I don't speak for women. I tell women speak for yourselves and look at these issues, look at what's going on. And a lot of times that was like the birth of *Poderistas*, was us to just build this platform to show Latinas, this is important. You might want to see this. Look at over here. Because in our life there are so many distractions of life, of childcare, and work, and your husband, and your marriage, and your relationships, and your family. That you go, "Wait, what's happening with the environment." It's just like, this is happening. You're like what? So just pulling focus and going, "Oye. Over here. You should probably look at this." And then having people pay attention, creates change.

Menendez: I remember, and forgive me, because I was trying to find this on YouTube and I couldn't find the moment. It was you on stage during one of the award shows during the *Desperate Housewives* period, and Terry Hatcher sort of referred to you as like the little one who is still skinny enough to order pizza. And I think about that moment and how you could have

200th Episode! Eva Longoria Always Knew She'd Succeed

been a flash in the pan. There are a lot of like really telegenic, talented girls who make their way through Hollywood, have a big show, and then we never hear about them again. And my perception of you, as an outsider, was that this didn't all happen to you. That you very much knew what you wanted, took the bull by the horns, and made it happen for yourself. So I want you to talk me through what that required of you, to go from the height of Housewives, to where we find you now. Where there is really early chatter about an Oscar nom for best director for Flamin' Hot. Like how do you go from here to there?

Longoria: I think a big thing for me was I was older when I became, quote unquote, famous. I was 29.

Menendez: You were 30.

Longoria: I was almost 30. Yeah. I was like 30. I knew who I was. I had such a grounded family. I think a lot of times when you start in this business, and the tabloids can define you of like America's sweetheart or America's bad girl, or you just fall into these, like, "Okay, I'm going to be that then. If that's what they say I am." And I just, it was like, "Whatever. Sure." They called me sexy. I was like, "Great, love it. Thank you." Which sometimes meant you couldn't be smart. And I just was like, "Well, but I'm, I can be both. So I'm going to be both."

Longoria: And getting out of Housewives, I will tell you, I mean, that was a decade of my life and there was so much I wanted to do and couldn't because the show took all year to record. So I used Desperate Housewives as my film school. And I paid attention. I mean, people always go, "You do your makeup so well." I go, "I've been in a makeup chair for 25 years. If you don't pick up something, then you're not paying attention." And I feel the same way with being on a set. I know where the lights go. I know where the camera is. I know the lenses. I know the shot. And it was just made sense to me and it all clicked and it was all, I wouldn't say easy, but it came natural to me. Like I just got it.

Longoria: And yeah, I had some great mentors and they were like, work, you've got to direct, you just keep doing it. And so literally what I just said, at the top of this podcast was like, I put my head down and my feet moving and I directed a lot of TV, a lot from Mark Cherry, because we were producing Devious Maids together. But Blackish, Jane the Virgin. I just kept going and I was like, "Yes, yes, yes." LA to Vegas. I did a lot of the mix. And I was just wanting to do more and more and more and more. So get a lot of experience under my belt. And then one day I looked up and it's been 10 years, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, I've been directing for 10 years. Like when did that happen?" I went from TV to pilots. And I directed this pilot for the CW, that's now on Netflix called Glamorous. And then I directed Gordita Chronicles for HBO max, which will be coming out this summer. So good.

Longoria: And so once my pilot started getting picked up, people were like, "Oh, okay. So she's a world creator. She can do maybe film." And I was like, I never had it. I love the medium of television. And when I was like, yeah, I mean, do I want to do film? Yeah. Yeah. I was just like, it wasn't like I was calculated about it. But then my agent sent me the script Flamin' Hot and I read it. And I was like, "I need to tell this story. His story's my story. His story's our story." And I remember my agent telling me that it's a long shot, because it's Searchlight, and you're a first time feature director. I'm like, "I've been directing for 10 years. I'm not a first time director." And they're like, "Well, first time feature." And so I just worked my ass off to do this presentation to get the job. But the point is like, I was definitely calculated about being successful. And I didn't know if that was going to be a successful actor, successful director, success...

Longoria: I just knew, it was like, I got to be successful. Whatever I'm going to do, I'm going to do 110%. And I knew that from when I was eight, like I knew I was going to be successful. I don't care if I was a dentist or a lawyer, but I knew I was going to be really good at it. And I think that's what it kind of takes, it's not just optimism because I'm a huge optimist. But it's the, I can do it and I'll do whatever it takes to get it done. And that's a lot of discipline and sacrifice and focus. And I work out every day. I am with my son every day. I work every day. I write every day. I journal. I meditate. I do everything and people go, "How do you do it all?" And I was like, "You waste a lot more time than you think in your day. Like there's a lot of wasted time. I don't do that. I'm very efficient with my day." Hence the reason this podcast was like in this window of like, it'll be from 9:34 to 10:03, this podcast.

Menendez: But beyond the efficiency, like you're in Oaxaca right now doing Search for Mexico, your CNN show. You have your podcast, Connections With Eva Longoria. You have Flamin' Hot, that's going to be your directorial debut on film. You're the co-founder of Casa Del Sol Tequila.

Longoria: Oh yes.

Menendez: I mean, so as a hyper efficient person and a high achiever, I look at you and I am deeply envious. And I also just, I see you all the time and I'm just like, "How? How?" I think I am getting a lot done in a day.

Longoria: Yeah.

Menendez: You are getting more done. And I mean, part of that also has to be the apparatus that you have built around yourself.

Longoria: Absolutely, absolutely. Look, I have the means to have an amazing staff that I can delegate to. You start to build the team around you that knows you, gets you, understands you, and knows how you work. And my family's support system, like my husband's here with me. So my husband's, I was like, "I got a podcast. Take the kid out." And he's like, "Got it. Done." And so yeah, look, you think you get a lot done and then you think I'm doing more than you. My mother does more than both of us combined, right?

Longoria: So that's my bar, is I see my mom who raised four girls, one with special needs, was a human taxi dropping us all over the place all over town, and had a full-time job as a teacher, special education teacher, and had dinner on the table every night at six o'clock, and never missed a band recital, never missed a practice, never missed a cheerleading game for any of us. Like I don't, I really think there was four of her growing up... And never got sick. I've never seen my mother have a cold or a cough or she never got COVID, God bless. But like, I was like, you are an alien mom, you're an alien. And so that's what I think, that's what I have to live up to. And so for me, I'm like not never, it's never enough. I can't do enough.

Menendez: It makes perfect sense that an alien birthed you and not an actual human. That might actually be the answer to my question. I think of this idea of editing, refining. I know you do emotional spring cleaning, which I love. And I'm going to start taking on. You have been married more than once and we are part of a culture ...

Longoria: We were just talking about this last night. Because something, I don't know what was in a, I don't know what we're reading and I go, "Oh my God, that guy was on a show with my ex-husband." And somebody goes, "They're on a show with Tony." And I go, "No, no, the other, no, the other ex-husband." They're like, "You were married for." I was like, "Yeah,

yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." It was so funny. It was like, I forget how many times I've been married.

Menendez: We tend to frame it, especially in our community as a failure. And I wonder, for you, how you now think about it.

Longoria: Well, I've always thought about it in the sense of you have to be happy. Like you've got to be happy at the end of the day. And somebody told me this and I thought it was the greatest advice because it was pertaining to it. I was like, "I got to, I don't want to get divorced. I got to get divorced." And she goes, "You can make a mistake, but you shouldn't live a mistake." And I was like, "Oh my God, I'm live," like I shouldn't have gotten married. And I was living in this mistake in my first marriage. Like we went, we toured Vegas, we got married. We're like, we didn't know each other. And I was like, "No, I have to stick through this." And she was like, "No, no, no. That was a dumb, that was a dumb idea." Like, and it could be a great person. It's just not the right time, not the right person for you.

Longoria: And so for me, when people go, "Oh my God, Eva, you've been married three times. You've been so unlucky in love." And I always go, "I've been super lucky in love. I've gotten married three times." I really see it half glass, where I'm like, "God, I fell in love with him. And I fell in love with him. And I fell in love with him." Like, that's pretty cool. I get to experience all this love in my life. And divorce doesn't have to be ugly and horrible. There's so many people that have redefined that concept as well, of like, "Hey, let's, co-parent. Let's be friends. Let's not have drama." And you go, "Oh my God, that's such a healthy divorce." You're like, "Yeah, it doesn't have to be crazy either."

Longoria: So I just think, yeah, there's a lot of conversation around it. And I think strictly for the Latino community and Latinas, there's definitely a stigma of failure to it. And I remember getting, being terrified to tell my parents, I was getting divorced from my first first husband. And my mom was like, "It's fine." She was like, "Okay." And I was like, "Oh, you're not, you're not mad?" But I remember feeling that pressure. Now I don't care. But back then, I remember it being a thing of like, "Oh God, how am I going to tell my parents?"

Menendez: I don't know if you'll remember this, about three years ago, when you were doing Grand Hotel, I interviewed you and the entire ensemble...

Longoria: Yes. Yes.

Menendez: I was very pregnant and I remember being very pregnant. And you sort of like, I especially felt I had to sprint to show everyone that I could do all the things that I did before I got pregnant. I turn around and I see you in like business woman mode. Because you're there as an actress, but you're fundamentally there as a producer. And you had Santi with you. You had your son with you. And even though this was not my first pregnancy, I was a second time mom. It gave me such a whew of like, okay, like there are ways to do this, and your way may not look like my way, may not look like her way. But like I can be all of these things at once. And I can give myself permission to be all of these things at once. How has having Santi, how has being a mom? How has that changed all of this?

Longoria: Well, it's funny you say that because you look, you see me. I was on, I felt the same way when I was pregnant. I was directing till I was eight months. I mean, I was huge. I remember being pregnant and thinking, "Oh my God, I've got to show people I can be just as good as I was not pregnant." But it was funny because when you're pregnant, everybody like opens doors for you. And it's like, "Are you okay? Do you want some water? Do you want to sit down?" Da, da, da. But once you have a baby, and you're on a plane

200th Episode! Eva Longoria Always Knew She'd Succeed

with a baby and a diaper bag and a stroller, everybody's passing you. They're like, "Excuse me, move it, move it." I'm like, "No, that's when we need help." But no, I remember feeling that too, of like, I have to do everything and then I let it go.

Longoria: I was like, I don't care. And I remember having Santi and directing as well. So I really never stopped working. Not that I recommend that. I just, that was me. Like, I was just like, I'm going to, I got to keep going. That's what I have to do. And so Santi was at eight weeks, no, maybe it was six weeks. I was still breastfeeding and I was on the set of Grand Hotel directing. And I was like, "How am I going to pump and breastfeed being on a set for 12 hours?" And I was like, "I'm just going to do it. Just going to be like, all right, sorry guys. I need 30 minutes. I got to go pump. I got to go breastfeed. I got to go pump. And then I'll be back." And I would breastfeed Santi on set.

Longoria: And I had so many women on that set come up to me, crying, going, "I've never seen a woman just do it. Like I was always embarrassed to even ask for time to do it. Much less do it on set." Or "I didn't want to take time off because I was nervous they were going to fire me or whatever." And I think that's part of us normalizing motherhood, right? We're all moms. This is like humanity. I'm procreating. I have to sustain this child with my breast milk. So I also am going to work. And so that's all okay. And everybody was so kind and happy about it. It wasn't a thing.

Longoria: Or I would just I just hold him and breastfeed him with a shawl over me. And I have so many videos of me breastfeeding Santi saying, "And action. And action." There he is on my boob. And I just love those photos. But just the women that came up to me and were like, "Thank you for doing it." So why is there shame or guilt about it? And just, I mean, I also think I'm not doing parenting a hundred percent all the time, and I'm not being a great business woman a hundred percent all the time. I have moments where I'm great at both. And then there's moments where I may miss something in Santi's life. And I may miss an opportunity in work. It's just a fact. And I just don't really put too much pressure on myself to be perfect for both all the time.

Menendez: I've been listening and enjoying your podcast Connections With Eva Longoria. And I notice something that comes up a lot for you, which is this idea of people's purpose.

Longoria: Yeah.

Menendez: And I wonder for you what you define as your purpose and how you got to that definition.

Longoria: Gosh, I haven't come to it yet. I haven't come to my purpose in life yet. I do think a grander purpose of humanity and human beings is to love. And that's been pretty consistent in any of the podcasts I've already recorded for Connections With Eva. But every single one of them comes back to love. Whether it's loving yourself, loving your neighbor, loving each other. I had Dr. Brian Weson, who's like a past life regression, believes in the past lives, and why we're here. And then Jay Shetty is a spirituality guru today. And they all kind of say the same thing. Like our sole purpose on this, in this earth is to love. And so I think my greater, greatest, greater purpose is to love. So I try very hard in my day to interact with people in a genuine way where they feel heard or supported or loved. Like, "Wow, that was a great interaction with somebody I didn't know." Or "That was a great interaction with Eva. I didn't know she was that way." Or "Of course she's that way."

Longoria: There's so many people that are always surprised when somebody's not an asshole. And they're like, "I met Eva, and she was so nice." Like they're super surprised by it, and you're like, "Why aren't you surprised when people are an asshole?" Everybody should be kind to

200th Episode! Eva Longoria Always Knew She'd Succeed

each other. And so for me, I think, I mean, that is my purpose. But like more specifically, I don't know yet. And I think it's okay because part of the fun of life is finding that purpose. You got to at least be headed, facing a direction of like, this is where I'm going. I don't know where I'm going to end up, but this is where I'm going. I have goals. And the purpose of my production company is job creation for Latinos. I mean, that's in front of, and behind the camera. That's definitely my goal and my purpose in producing and directing. But I think that's all part of a greater scheme of making sure our community's loved by everybody.

Menendez: Eva Longoria, this was such a gift. Thank you so much for doing this.

Longoria: Thank you. Thank you so much. Let me tell you, what you're doing with this podcast in talking to so many women, and so many Latinas is something to be applauded. The fact that you've been doing it for three years, you've touched so many people and I've been such a fan of it for so long. And I just think kudos to you and everything you're doing. You're doing it and you're doing it well.

Menendez: Okay. I'm going to get off before I cry. Thank you so much.

Menendez: Thank you, as always, for listening. Latina to Latina is executive produced and owned by Juleyka Lantigua and me, Alicia Menendez. Paulina Velasco is our producer. Manuela Bedoya is our marketing lead. Kojin Tashiro is our associate sound designer and mixed this episode. We love hearing from you. It makes our day. Email us at hola@latinatolatina.com. Slide into our DMs on Instagram. Tweet us @latinatolatina. Check out our merchandise that is on our website, latinatolatina.com/shop. And remember, please subscribe or follow us on RadioPublic, Apple Podcast, Google Podcast, Goodpods, wherever you are listening right now. Every time you share this podcast, every time you share an episode, every time you leave a review, it helps us to grow as a community.

CITATION:

Menendez, Alicia, host. "200th Episode! Eva Longoria Always Knew She'd Succeed." *Latina to Latina*, LWC Studios. May 23, 2022. LatinaToLatina.com.

Produced by:

