

## TRANSCRIPT FOR HABLEMOS AUTISMO EPISODE 2

### INTERVIEW WITH ANUEL AA

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Hello, my name is Tony Hernández Pumarejo and welcome to this new episode of Hablemos Autismo, the new podcast that is making a difference for our autism community around the world, especially in our Hispanic community. And thanks for tuning in for this episode, which today is a very special, historic episode.

So, invite your relatives, invite your friends, your community! Today, I am going to have a very special interview with a person who has my sincere respect, a legend, a mega star and a Puerto Rican like me. I have the honor and privilege of interviewing Anuel AA!

Anuel AA is a reggaeton, rap and especially Latin trap singer and as I mentioned, born and raised in the “Isla del Encanto”, Puerto Rico, his music throughout his career has contained samples of different songs, especially those that were popular during his youth. Anuel began his music career in 2011 and now Anuel is working with Reebok to design a collection of new sneakers and shoes called “The Sky Above the Street” collection, available exclusively at Foot Locker and Champs Sports. The collection is part of the "Be Seen" campaign. This has to do with what autism awareness month is, which highlights the autistic community with inclusive shoe designs, opportunities in the fashion industry. So, the honor and privilege in my life of interviewing the only one, Anuel AA!

Anuel, thank you for being with me on my podcast. I am very honored!

**Anuel AA:** Amen! Thank you for having me here! Always good and positive and always doing something for autism. let's do this!

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Let's do this! Thank you. Thank you for everything you are doing. You Know? I am a fan of yours. In addition to being Puerto Rican, I am a fan of your music, of your career, and also of your story. I am very excited and privileged to have you, so let's start with a little bit about your story Anuel, This one for our audience who are watching and listening to us. What was your life like growing up in Puerto Rico? If you can talk a little bit about your journey?

**Anuel AA:** My life was really. I had a very nice life. I grew up in a good family, true middle class. I honestly did not go through lack of life necessities since I was little. My father worked a lot, but he lost his job. And when he lost his job, he sold everything he could with the money, a couple of bad decisions, things went wrong, but my father always continued to sacrifice himself every day to be able to bring food to the table at home, you understand? And until a certain moment he no longer had, he no longer had those same opportunities that he had, he didn't have them, you know? He lost his job, he started losing all the money. The house could no longer be paid for. The bank went to take away the house. Little by little, my life there, little by little, was taking a more, darker, more independent path, do you understand? That these were not the best decisions I made, and I left my house to go live on streets alone, to become a man by myself. But. God's plan is perfect. If that didn't happen, I wouldn't be here today, I wouldn't be who I am today. And well, I can tell you that I have experienced the best of both worlds in Puerto Rico. I know what it is to be born in a good family, not needing to be close to any type of danger, but to be in a very, very peaceful, very positive, very decent circle.

**Anuel AA :** And I also know what it's like to be in the worst of the worst. And lived the worst of the worst in Puerto Rico, (because anyone is from Puerto Rico already knows what I am talking about). And there's nothing better than right now, since I'm up here. Show the world. Everything that has grown in the heart, in the mind, you understand. And I have many followers and for me before it was something that I did not see, I did not see it from that point of view or like that, like something that I could say that had such an influence. And since then, I learned that I changed my main focus after I because now I am the father of two girls and a boy, my main focus is to give a positive message. I am from the street, that's how I represent the street. But my life also took a good turnaround and took another turn. From the moment that I separate myself from the street and from everything that has to do with the radio, then I write about the street through music. But Anuel is, I, I am my own example, the example of any human who has made a million mistakes, but fell, got up focused and sacrificed and worked to be better, understand? And I did it. And I thank God, and my circle around me, my environment, my team, Dj Luian, Los Mambo, Camile, Hear This Music, Real Hasta La Muerte

**Anuel AA:** Everyone together as a family. My father now works with me. Things happen for a reason in life. At the beginning of my career, I worked with my dad and my dad worked in music. Lost his job. He could never help me the way he wanted; you know? For me to fulfill my dream, do you understand me? And now that I have fulfilled it and life is beautiful. After I fulfilled it, certain situations happened in my team and now I ended up working with him again. Understand that I am with my family now, my closed circle and well, that is Anuel's life.

Anuel's life is like a roller coaster, going up and down, but always fighting and moving forward, showing that despite the tribulations, the fires, the mountains, whatever, with faith in your heart and with God in your heart and being a warrior, you go through whatever circumstance life throws at you. And with God in your heart there is no one, there is no one. I am a believer in my heart I do not feel that there is anything. There is no goal that I will not achieve. There is nothing that I cannot achieve. There is nothing that can stop me when I have a goal with God in my heart.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Amen. And what you are saying Anuel is beautiful, because sometimes many people, you as a public figure, sometimes most people focus on the end result, they say: "ah look, this guy had everything easy", but they don't know about behind the scenes. You are a mega star. Your story has been described in different ways as an artist, but controversial. However, for me, if you ask me how I would describe Anuel's journey, I would describe it with one word and that is perseverance, because of the different situations, ups and downs and situations that I imagine you went through, times when you didn't even know how you were going to survive those circumstances. And that was, reading little of your history, of your biography, of what you have achieved. For me it is how I define your journey, Anuel, perseverance.

**Anuel AA:** And for that very reason I feel that my movement is so big on the street and they love me so much on the street because they are people, they identify with me. I'm not here so that... I'm not standing in front of the cameras to lie, to make a movie for you, that I'm perfect, that I'm the best artist in the world, that I can be number one and tomorrow I'll know what it's like to be number one ten. number five, number 20. Do you understand? Just as I know what it is like to have nothing and to be at home working for a dream without knowing if I'm going to achieve it or not, then that's what I feel it does to me, the heart of a warrior that I have.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** That's how it is. And to tell a little bit more of your story, how, how was it? Did it have an impact on your music and how did it explode, evolving your outlook on life in music?

**Anuel AA:** My story in music, I am me. I feel that I am a mix. I don't feel I am a mixture of different cultures. And that's why I feel that I don't feel for that. With the knowledge I have of music, so much for that, that's why I know what happened to me and my career. It has continued to grow and is very different from many other artists. Thanks to a positive way and work and focus and discipline. And the work team is the most important thing of all. My mother spoke English all her life, since I was born, and my dad spoke Spanish, you know? and because of my culture it was always American music and mixed salsa. When my dad was working at Sony, time evolved and became reggaeton. And then you go back to that mix of culture that I have, that I listened to hip hop and music in English so much and I dared to do it in Spanish, because, the biggest artists in the world right now, yes there are Americans, But now if they are mixed between Latino and American, they are no longer just Americans, at one time they were just Americans. And the music they made was number one in the world. And the Latinos, the reggaeton. And just like that, I created the idea in my mind and I dared to do it and I achieved it. Thanks to God, I try to make and develop a career and learn it and achieve the dream, a whole career like you, as you said it early you say when, you say the word, how did you say...?

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Perseverance, perseverance.

**Anuel AA:** Perseverance, understand. I went to prison... I was given the opportunity after so much, after so many ups and downs, the opportunity is gone. I am helping my family; I remember it as if it was yesterday. When I was arrested, I went to prison in April 2016 and I remember that last Christmas that I was free , because this was the first holiday that I had money and I had to go to the mall and buy something for each member of my family. For the first time in my life, do you understand? That I went to jail and I was on top of my game and it was something that I also thought was going to happen to me. If you understand me? And yes, God was there, God was there and got that power that made the difference in my life. What everyone did was reggaeton, I went out singing trap and I was still me, normally they prepare the artists before the interviews, they prepare them for everything, to speak, they prepare them to do what

the artist says they are, the artist understands , I just go out, I am me and that's it. And if one separates the business from the career of one's personal life, but when it comes to selling myself to the public I am me, I am Anuel. That is why they have seen all my failures; they have seen all my successes and they have seen all my achievements. And just as they have seen my achievements, so they have seen all my falls too. Because I am the same as everyone and my movement is "real hasta la muerte". That is the most that connects with people's hearts. Trap is music, a mixture of American hip hop with Latin, to the Latin shout that I make, that I started to do, to develop a career in that, mixed with reggaeton, because you always go, seeing Daddy Yankee as inspiration, Don Omar, Arcangel, Hector The Father, etc.

**Anuel AA :** But I study music. At that time, the greatest music in the world was American music, because I mixed American music with Latin music and thank God it worked for me and I became Anuel. He was born "real hasta la muerte" (real until death), real, until death, which was not a company that I planned, or what I created today to start promoting my career. I was standing in the booth one day and it came naturally out of my mouth. And from that moment that first song came out that I said "real hasta la muerte", when I yelled it at concerts, then I am the street made music, but at the same time I learned to evolve thanks to all the knowledge that my father gave me. in music since I was a baby, if you understand me and that is why I can record with any type of music, because I am a mixture of the street, of the worst, of the street made music, mixed with... mixed with too much wisdom and knowledge great of a musician. My father was a musician. My father played bass with Hector Lavoe; he ended up as president of Sony. I feel that all this happens, I have it in my veins, because I have the street inside me and I am the street artist that represents the street in the entire world, from Puerto Rico. But at the same time the musical knowledge that I have is so and so great and so and so great. It's like a mixture of different cultures and that's why I feel that Anuel was the phenomenon that he was.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** That's how it is. This is how you evolved, both professionally and personally in your music, how it evolves, right now Latin trap expanded greatly compared to just a few years ago.

**Anuel AA:** Yes, the trap is global. One had no position on the platform and putting a trap on the radio was difficult, but I remember the first time they played a trap song of mine, The first time I heard myself on the radio. Everyone was heard except mine. Mine

was censored on the radio. It's been a long road, it's been a long road. And Anuel is the best of both worlds as a street artist representing the street. But I also have great knowledge and wisdom about music. That's why I know how to sing and write about any type of rhythm, I feel like making my own rhythm and recording myself, you know what I mean.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** I appreciate that you are sharing this experience with our audience of making music, as it happens. Your experience is unique, and we appreciate you very much Anuel. And now in getting a little bit into this collaboration you have with Reebok. What inspired you to enter into this collaboration?

**Anuel AA:** My first dream was to be a basketball player and get to the NBA, and my favorite player. at the time it was Iverson

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Allen Iverson

**Anuel AA:** Yes, Allen Iverson. But in Puerto Rico he was a phenomenon where I grew up. Iverson was a phenomenon. I have braids, everyone was in braids for him, long hair and everyone got dressed, everyone put on tennis shoes, you understand and. The bracelets on the arm hit the flag. But Iverson, like LeBron and Wade, wear bracelets on their arms and that's part of the culture in the NBA. He (Iverson) and Jordan were the before and after of the NBA style of play. Before, they played very straight, very fundamental, very different and when they arrived, it was a phenomenon and since I was little when Iverson's Reeboks came out, I bought them and speaking clearly, my best friend was Casper, who is also a singer and is also famous. He had very long braids, he bought Iverson's Reeboks and put them on... and the sneakers, everyone bought the sneakers to go play on the basketball court and for me to also achieve this deal with the Reebok and big. Look how my life has been. This was my first. My first love was basketball and Iverson was one of those big phenomenon.

**Anuel AA:** I idolized Iverson. After that, over time, when I started my dream in music, Rick Ross signed me, who at that time was the hottest American rap artist of that moment, of that generation. And when he travels to Miami to sign me, I'm not famous yet, I get to know him, to meet him in the middle of a literally a Reebok press conference, that he had the Reebok deal. And doing the press conference wearing what he had been on. So Reebok was in my life from a very young age and it was a great

influence and now being able to achieve this big deal for me is important. First it was through Foot Locker, then I ended up making the deal directly with Reebok and well, we are a family and for it, is one of the greatest things that has happened in my career to be able to have a deal like that. Not everyone can say I have a deal with such a brand with Reebok... to be able to continue opening the door for the Latino market and showing great things, that if I did it in the future, other artists will be able to do it and opening the door as it opened also for Daddy Yankee, Don Omar and Wisin y Yandel to be able to continue like this. So that future generations can achieve these things that before seemed impossible and are now possible with work, effort and dedication, they are so not easy, if they are, it is so common that it happens right now, since Latin artists, Latin music has the same respect or more respect than American music and it's a dream come true to be able to represent Reebok.

**Anuel AA:** I also grew up watching Shaquille. Shaq was like a superhero; Shaq was in every movie when I was little. He had his own superhero movies and they are people who influenced my life a lot and being able to be in this company right now. And since the way they treat me, they have me as the face of Reebok in the Latin America and it is a blessing from God and the opportunity they give me to develop my creativity in tennis, they give me the opportunity to choose the colors for the shoes, etc. We are a family for me, apart from music, this is a great step to see the future of the genre, so that it continues to grow, for future big stars of the genre.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Excellent. And you guys are doing excellent. It's going to have a big impact.

**Anuel AA:** Amen

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** In the upcoming years. And now we are going to talk a little bit about autism. It is the topic that has given me purpose in my life. Since I've been here. A little bit of my story. I was diagnosed with autism at the age of three, in the early 90's. I was born and raised in Puerto Rico. At that time I did not know much about autism, as it is known today. I was nonverbal at four years old. At that time my parents were looking for an answer to what was happening with me and even this and this is part of my story. To me, to my mother, a teacher there in Puerto Rico, Department of Education, told my mother that I was mentally retarded, that is, there were those comments and then this through my story. I faced different challenges, challenges in

social communication, making friends, anxiety. That had an impact on my life. I went through bullying, bullying in my school life, this and situations and even situations that are not common with other autistic people. Autism is different for everyone, but over time I could overcome. Thank you. First, thank God because without God we are not, we are not here. This was the support of people, including my family and friends, that I was able to overcome those challenges to be able to, for example, do different things, graduate from university, work full time, even write my own book. Being speaker, I have even been on television. I was on television.

**Anuel AA:** You are interviewing me right now!

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Imagine that!

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** You have your niece who has autism. Do you feel, especially in our culture, that there is a stigma attached to having autism? What you believe? Based on your experience, your career? What do you think we can do to further increase acceptance and inclusion, especially in our Hispanic community?

**Anuel AA:** It is that I think that this is not on you guys (autistic people), because you are not doing anything wrong. I feel that this is on this world, I know what it is to go through all that. I have seen relatives who go through all that and well, I don't know, I feel that the World is what must change. I started trying to be a better human being, not just for that. Not just for that moment, that occasion, but it was a big moment in my life and now that we're talking about autism, that's why I feel to share it. I have learned a lot from people with autism, so no, the ones who have to change first are us.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** There are challenges in Autism, yes, but it doesn't mean that people are incapable of having a great life and making a difference.

**Anuel AA:** Sure, a person too. Everything, everything is in the person, in the heart and in the mind. You can be the healthiest person in the world out there, with all the opportunities in life. And if you have a bad heart and bad decisions and there are no values or education. And I come back and tell you the heart comes first. Nothing will happen, no matter how talented the most talented person in the world is. Nothing will happen to him, brother, if he does not have the heart, if he does not have the focus, if he does not have the mind, if he does not have the willpower to sacrifice himself,



believe in what no one believes, in what is not seen and move forward knowing that it is going to have results, if you understand me?

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** What do you hope your partnership with Foot Locker / Reebok will play a role in changing that we include autistic people in our world? How do you think it will have an impact?

**Anuel AA:** We are already going for the second drop of the sneakers, or the tennis shoes. And obviously just one tennis drop is not going to be the change in the whole world, but it is a step, if you know what I mean, and little by little one has to follow. Things don't change from one day to the next and Rome wasn't built in a day. One has to work and get hooked on the goal and develop it. And in such a dark world, nowadays, you have to do things like that, for people to see. We sometimes, without realizing it, give a negative message through our music, I am in the moment of my life, since I am Anuel, I have shown who I am, but also to show what I am I have fallen a lot because I'm not perfect, I've had a lot of ups and downs and this of being the number one artist in the world, of being among the top three of the top five in the world. And it's always up there. No, it doesn't come with a manual, you understand, because you learn along the way and life is a roller coaster. Better carry the message. Learn to make associations and collaborations with such an association, supporting autism. They are things that come from my heart, so they do come from my heart, and I am the same as I am for music and it has been me to demonstrate all my faults, to demonstrate how I demonstrate all my assets and also demonstrate my faults. My successes have been seen as well as my failures. Likewise, I am going to show who I am in real life, you also understand and even more so if I can help and I can be of great influence and I can help in the world of autism, which I have my niece with autism, would be the most perfect thing in the world.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** What message do you want to give to the world to help autistic people and their families?

**Anuel AA:** The message that I would give the world. And not just to help people with autism, but for all people who need help, those who are experiencing needs for whatever they are going through in any situation. As an influential person in the world and a public figure, the best I can do is the best that could be done, that the whole world. If the world follow us (artists) a lot, this world is going to depend... It has created

celebrities so great to a level that people idolize us. When that shouldn't be. But this is the world and true. I feel that if all the celebrities in the whole world come together to support this type of cause, and not only Autism, but any type. Any type of situation that they want to create as a problem, people who need help and people like us in the world. I am the first one in the first row who has set bad examples on different occasions in my life.

**Anuel AA:** But here with this question that they ask me, we celebrities come together and actually agree not to give a negative message, that everything has to be positive, obligatory. If not, the music will not go ahead or the platforms will not support you if you do not have something positive going forward or something like that. I believe that the world here will change, not that it will change, because change begins at home, in the heart, inside if you understand me, the root. But since we are so influential, if you understand me, so many great people in the world uniting to bring the same positive message or a different positive message, this would create a great change in the World, I think, because this world has already done so. I studied the world and the world tends to pay attention to great people, artists, great people like us, who influence so much that by doing one negative thing they can influence a lot of human beings, they go on to do negative things. In the same way, we can carry the positive message and if we were all united, made into one, since many unite in a cause, we could change the world. Yes, but a single person cannot, a single person. We can assemble and create the idea and take it and execute it so that another one continues to grow and grow, if you understand me? And little by little something like this can happen one day. And there is a big change.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Exactly. It's up to us to unite. To be able to make a difference. That is the key. Hey, would you like to make a song for autism one day, Anuel?

**Anuel AA:** I would love it, but if I would do it, I would like, look, if I would like to do it like that, right now we are planning a song that would come out the same day as the tennis drop. And it was part or was part of the plans, but it wasn't done, but it was part of the plans to release the song with tennis. That everything 100% was also donated to the Autism Association. Understands? And I would. But you, I would do it to make it more special. I would have the same musician who is autistic write the song for me and I would do it there. And that would be super awesome. They can make me a great big

theme for the song (autism) And there I will take it without pride (ego) . I. Look, I write 95% of my music I write it myself and with an autistic person writing the entire song for me for autism and carrying the positive message that would be awesome. I would do it like that, of course.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Let's see if we can make that possible. I can help you with that!

**Anuel AA:** If we put together a show and make it a top song, don't say reggaeton, trap like I do, but music, very beautiful music.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** And have an impact.

**Anuel AA:** Music that touches all ages, that touches a type of rhythm. Also that it reaches all ages, that it is not something like that for my generation or for me, that it does not focus only on my type of fan base, but all.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** How good and how beautiful, your story... this interview has been impactful, historic. Before ending the interview, Anuel, anything else you want to say to our audience who are watching, especially families who have loved ones with Autism, who are watching and listening to this podcast?

**Anuel AA:** I feel and I believe that autism is a superpower. Over time it passes and new conclusions and results are developed and perhaps one day they will stop diagnosing it under one , as you say it?

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** A disability

**Anuel AA:** Under a disability, I think so. I believe that one day autism will. I think that if one day they stop saying that it is a disability.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** The honor and privilege of my life has been to interview you here on my podcast. This has been a historic interview that I know will have an impact throughout the world. My best wishes to you and your family. Many blessings on your projects now.

**Anuel AA:** Thank you!

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** And that come around and it would be an honor to meet you one day in person, it would be my honor.

**Anuel AA:** Amen, One day soon, God willing, we meet in person and you interview me in person.

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** You got it, count on it! Thank you for being with me in this episode of Hablemos Autismo with Tony Hernandez Pumarejo!

**Anuel AA :** Many blessings my king, thanks to you for having me here!

**Tony Hernandez Pumarejo:** Thank you!