

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 0:35

We are at the Drake Memorial Library in Brockport, on the campus of SUNY Brockport, I'm Jon Goehring with Michael Latona. We are doing this oral history interview for the SUNY Brockport archives. I'm interviewing a current student and getting your perspective on education. Because that's the theme of our oral history project this semester. So, Michael, just tell me a little bit first about your family, your family background, where did you grow up and, and what was your family life like when you were young?

Michael Latona 1:13

So, I'm first generation here. My parents were born in Sicily. So, growing up here was a bit different than most people. My mom was my mom was actually born here. She's first generation, but both her parents were born in, one was born in Italy. [Her?] mom was born in Germany. And my dad was born in Sicily. So, I don't know if I'm considered first generation because my mom isn't in but I'm not sure. But I grew up with. My parents were divorced when I was one. So, I grew up with my mom. And so, I was like, six, and then live with my dad for a little bit, and then just enjoying joint custody after that. It was interesting, growing up with that experience, you know, coming from Sicily, my dad was very, very nontraditional in an American lifestyle. So, he was very, you know, he didn't want anything to go to waste. They were very poor when I lived in Sicily, so he kind of wanted us to have everything we could, I wouldn't say we were spoiled. You know, he never like bought us a car or anything like that. But he tried to like, I mean, he was working 70 hours a week since he was, since I can remember, and to try and get us whatever we wanted, and stuff like that, and have a house and all that. So, it was interesting. Growing up, we grew up around Pembroke in Penfield, New York. We moved from there to Connecticut for a little bit. And then we moved from Connecticut to Webster, New York. And then I was actually in

Connecticut, going in new Fairfield about an hour and 10 minutes away from the city during 9/11. I was in fifth grade when that happened. And that was an interesting experience. Some of the kids that went to school with their parents were killed in the attacks. So that was a pretty surreal experience. I was just happy. You know, my mom didn't work in the city or anything. So, but a couple of my, we were living in, with my uncle at the time there. And his, two of his friends work in the city there. So. But yeah, it's difficult.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 3:31

And would you say that was something that really defined your childhood at least early on?

Michael Latona 3:37

It's a pretty big memory. I think just because it was like, you know, it's like, I wouldn't say that it really affected me as a kid. Like, I mean, I didn't really, I mean, I was in fifth grade, I didn't understand it completely. I just knew something bad happened. Like, I didn't really respect or like understand the toil it had. But it was definitely a surreal, like, it's like a flash memory. Like I remember very well like what I was wearing when I was doing. It was, I mean, it was just It's kind of crazy to think back on. But I don't know, it's like one of those things you kind of have to be there to like, really respect completely. So, I mean, not that people who didn't live away from the city can, can't understand what happened during 9/11. But it was just, I don't know, it's like a weird it was it's just a weird memory. I wouldn't say I have any, like negative feelings towards the memory. It's just strange. It's just like, strange to think about, I guess, because I was young. I didn't really understand it.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 4:39

When did you move? Connecticut then back? You said to Webster.

Michael Latona 4:45

So, I moved from Connecticut back to Webster, New York. I lived with my dad for a little bit. And then well, my mom when she was trying to move back, she got a job and so I lived with my dad. And then that's right around the time they ended up getting like, you know, so I was back and forth. The, my mom, my dad for a long time. And yeah, and so after that, I after, in, seventh grade, I moved to Perry, New York. That was the last place I moved. So, I lived in Perry and graduated high school in Perry. And then pretty much stayed in Perry, I graduated and then moved to Rochester after I graduate, to go to MCC.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 5:24

What were your experiences like? How did they differ in Connecticut going to school there? And I'm assuming that was like a bigger, more of a bigger city environment than in Perry. Very small town. So how did those experiences differ?

Michael Latona 5:37

Yeah, it was completely different. I think Perry was kind of like, especially getting into my personal cuz I'm going to, I'm going to school to be a teacher. And going from Connecticut to Perry and Connecticut was number one is a completely different curriculum. And it was much, much harder for me as a kid in Connecticut. In fifth grade, they want to hold me back. They wanted to hold me back a year or have me start at the fourth-grade level when I got to Connecticut, after I took some tests there and my mom said no. And so, I ended up like going on to sixth grade. As soon as I came back. As soon as I was in Perry. I mean, I started doing okay, I was never

really good in high school. I think. But Perry, it was a lot easier of a high school, like I just never really did homework. But when it came to tests, always did really well, pretty much aced all my tests, my lowest grade on my regents was like an 89. And my highest was like, just shy of 100 was like 99 or 98 as my so like, I did really well and all my regents, did all good on my tests but refused to do homework. Teachers hated me for it. It wasn't till like 12th grade. Well, 11th and 12th I got to teachers Ms. (Hubak?) and Ms. (hose?). Um, you know, I've always had like, strong women have played like a lot in my life. You know, growing up with this, you know, my mom was in the single parent, my dad had both cuts, you know, cuts the two but you know, my mom was really tough growing up, which was nice to see. I still had my dad in my life too. But Miss (?) and Ms. (?) both, they really like it when I started taking my tests. So, Miss (?) class, she was my math teacher, I had a, like a 62, or something in her class in my final grade. And in order to pass, I needed to get like a 90 something on the regents. And she was just like, basically didn't think I was going to pass and had to take it again. ended up getting like a 98. And she was, just sat me down with the whole tough love thing. You know, you're smart, you know, you're lazy, I just get lazy, don't want to do homework. But after talking to her, you know, she really showed me that she cared, which was something that I didn't get in like Middle School in high school, teachers just assumed I was lazy and not going to go anywhere and but miss (?), sat down, she's like, I know you're smart. And so, then like, and then once I got to 12th grade, Miss Hughes was one of my favorite teachers inspired me to become a teacher, very involved with every student, not just me. I mean, she made every student feel like her friend. And like, you know, a mentor. And like she was a mentor, and she cared about everybody she would sit one on one with and like your papers, and we had to do a thesis for our final for 12th grade. And she would just go through one at a time, the amount of effort she put into teaching was just mind blowing, because I saw her like one on one with so many different teachers.

And it was just there. So many different students. And like thinking back on, you know, I just wish I can be as good of a teacher as that. And that's why I think not, not to suck up to Dr. Martin. But you know, that's another teacher I think at the Brockport like school at the City University of rock or whatever. Miss, Professor Martin, Dr. Martin is incredible. She makes me feel like it's like she's always made it. Out of all the professor's here, they seem to be a little bit disconnected from the student body. They don't have as much of an education background. But Dr. Martin just reminded me of Ms. (?) and miss (?), and I think she's an awesome teacher. And I try, I would try and take every single class I could with her. But I think it's, I took my last one. So, but she just reminds me of like those teachers and someone who cares and goes above and beyond. And so,

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 9:51

So, Perry, would you say throughout your high school experience, that sort of set your foundation for how you view education and especially becoming, wanting to become a teacher?

Michael Latona 10:04

Yeah, yeah, I think so. Um, I think that if it wasn't for those teachers at Perry, I would not have gotten into education.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 10:14

So, it was it was the teachers themselves. That wasn't your whole experience of education, because you actually didn't like it.

Michael Latona 10:21

Yeah, no, not at all. Yeah, I think it was just the teachers is just specifically miss (?) and Ms. (?), and a couple of other ones, Mr. (?),

he was kind of cool. But, um, I think he's kind of a jackass, to be honest. But he was all right. He got me going and he cared. But he wasn't as good as them. I mean, to this day, the Vice Principal over there. Well, he's a, he's a superintendent. Now. Mr. McLaughlin hates my guts. I'm 28. I haven't gone to school there since I was, it's been 10 years. And every time I go and visit my hometown, I always see him somewhere in town. Or if I visit the school, I'll see him there. And all he does is with Latona, and then doesn't call me Michael, he still hates, it's so ridiculous, because I used to be class clown get kicked out of class every once in a while. So, he I mean, so I don't think it was the institution of education. I think it was really just, you know, if you look at the institution of education, it tends to be I don't know, I think that the, what makes up the people that make up education tend to be more on the liberal side, especially like more focused towards human rights and stuff like that. I think that that's really what tied me, you know, to liking education, as an institution. That makes sense.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 11:37

Yeah. So, it's an interesting perspective that you have is actually a student who, not a teacher's student. You know, certainly like a class clown, like you said, yet wanting to become that teacher. Do you think that's going to, in your future, if you do become a teacher, certainly play a role in and improve your teaching skills having been in the shoes of those students that you may struggle with?

Michael Latona 12:07

Oh, yeah, absolutely. I think that those are the students that I connect with most, I think that you can use, you know, with, with my experience with teaching, you know, I have a lot of experience and with, like teaching in the classroom, and not a lot, but I did substitute teaching for a year, and I've done summer camps every once in a

while. And I did, I've done 80 hours of student observation for the MCC. And well, like six weeks, I've done like, 20, so far this year, but I've done like, and even in my observation that I'm in now, he lets me teach one lesson a day. And I think that class clowns are the ones that stick out. You know, it's really, it's really about how you handle a situation. You know, when a kid lashes out, even now, like thinking back, all they're doing is they want attention, and they want to make people laugh, or they want to do something, they're either they either just like having attention, they don't get enough at home, whatever it is, I think I got more than nothing at all, I was just as but, but when it you know, it's just like how you read the situation, how you handle it, I think handling a situation, any, any, any situation in the classroom can be less. And obviously, there's sometimes where you really got to put your foot down because it gets ridiculous, but you know, anything, it's just how a teacher handles it, approaches it. And I think that, you know, if you embrace the humor in the classroom and make them feel like, it's okay for them to say what they're thinking, I think that's, that's pretty pivotal in the classroom setting. And it helps people like it helps students become who they are, and who they will be as a student, as a person after school. And, yeah, I mean, I think that having a respect for those kids, also. Just, yeah, it's nothing but a benefit. But you also got to remember to like, just beside a lot of friends that are silent and quiet, you know, there are students who don't like distractions. So, you really got to balance it, you obviously can't have a, you know, like, an, you know, crazy classrooms of clown. Yeah, but, and you have to balance it right. But I don't know, I think that a lot of teachers. I don't want to say like judging integrity with people, but I think a lot of teachers that get into teaching especially in like city schools and stuff like that, just become so sick of like this student body. And so, they treat like the institution of education, and they treat it like a job and not a career. And I think that's a big, a big problem.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 14:35

But so, did you know, your senior year of high school? Did you know that that's what you wanted to do? Or did it take you some time?

Michael Latona 14:43

um, I think senior years really want to start developing the idea of what I wanted to do. And of course, with my dad, and my mom, you know, they both did not want me to teach. They both were like, you know, you should get a real job and this and that, and I but once, I got this, like, once I got to college, I just realized that's like, my first semester there, I realized I really wanted to teach. You know, I liked being I like the idea that I can change the try and change the institution within trying me. At least my classroom, I can change, make it a better environment. The way that I can see it, so that's when I realized that I think it was like my freshman year of college is when I was like, Yes, I'm going to teach at MCC.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 15:33

So, you went down to for, for two years for three, Okay. And then you came here?

Michael Latona 15:40

No, actually no. Yeah. So, I went to MCC for three years graduated in 2012. So, 2009 to 2012. So, three years, graduated in 2012. By graduating 2012.

I don't know if you know what Bitcoin is?

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 15:59

Oh, yeah.

Michael Latona 16:00

So, like, Bitcoin was becoming a thing. And a couple of my friends. Like, we're into that and other ideas and stuff like that. We ended up wanting to move to California. And we ended up doing like a whole bunch of stuff there. And so, we did, I took like, about a five-year break. Doing, just living like an idiot in California. And we're just making money out there. And we ended up. We ended up doing a business out there. And basically, just buying and selling crypto and teaching how to buy and sell crypto and stuff like that. My friends were got really into mining. I didn't really understand how that worked. But they were. They knew how it worked. And we did that. And it got a little volatile. I like volatile. And it was a little bit scary. And right around 2000 was a 2016, 2016 I decided to move back because my dad ended up getting sick. And he's fine now. But I ended up selling out right around 2017. I sold everything I had that was in Bitcoin, when it spiked. And then I started back up at Brockport. And here is my third semester back. So, when I started 2018, I started back up here.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 17:35

so, you kind of return to what you knew you wanted to do at MCC when you came here?

Michael Latona 17:41

Yeah, yeah. So, when I graduated MCC I wanted to take a small break and pursue other things. Not that I just don't know, I was kind of burnt out a little bit from school, I did really well in MCC a lot better. And obviously a lot better than that I did High School. When I graduated, it was like a three, I got a three, a three-eight or something. You know, kept in touch with some of my teachers from high school. But I didn't want to go to school right away, just because MCC was

free for me. And then anything above MCC is pay grade, I would have to start getting loans and stuff out. And I was just kind of like, I don't know if I want loans right now, I was working like I had got a job where I was making like 40 a year and I was like, this is kind of cool. You know, I was like still like 20 something I was making 40 a year. So, I thought it was like a top dog. But obviously, that after that I was like you know what I really want to be with my friends in California. And so, I just did it. And then five years went by. So that's pretty. Yeah. And then I really basically I ended up working in a summer camp. And then doing substitute teaching was Toronto high school when I got back. And that's when I realized like, Oh, shit, like, obviously, I want to go back to school. Like, I want to do this. It's awesome. So

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 18:59

So it wasn't that wasn't like a driving decision for you to move from California back?

Michael Latona 19:04

No, no, that was strictly because my dad basically fell out of a tree and broke his foot in 12 places. And so, yet he lost his job. And he was asking me to come help and like move in and pay the mortgage. And so that's what I did for a little while.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 19:22

So, coming back here, you have different perspective, because you're a little bit older. And living off campus. How is the experience here been? Have you felt like you've been able to fit into this college community? Despite, you know, having that disconnect of not living on campus?

Michael Latona 19:38

Oh, yeah, easily. I mean, I live at the Bronx. So, it's almost like campus living, and I have roommates and even to being 28. I'm not very, like, I'm not the most mature person. So, like, I mean, I fit in fine. I act like a kid. And I do. I mean, the only thing I don't do is really participate in like the party scene anymore. I like to be in bed by nine but. Besides that, I mean, I think, I think at least I think so. I mean, maybe there's like some anti Michael Latona hate group here on campus, but I think I do fine. And then I don't know, I feel like if I was like a more mature 20-year-old, it might be a little bit of a different experience. Sometimes I'm like humbled by certain things like I was in a group. Like I've been in a couple group projects and stuff like that. And when we get done, we're like, oh, you should come hang out and get beer and party. And I'm just like, no, I'm gonna go home watch some mystery shows and go to bed. So, I mean, besides like not participating in the party scene, I think it's almost exactly this, it's definitely a lot better than MCC. It's smaller. It's not as diverse as MCC. But it's definitely a lot less. There's a lot of like classrooms and MCC, especially in the beginning of the year, especially the fall, beginning of the year, were just so packed. It was ridiculous. And like there's a lot of like, you know, 20 students or less per classroom classes, especially when you get to like junior level. And, you know, there's not a ton of students per class. I like that a lot. I like less students to like to the teacher. And I think I think some of the teachers at MCC, though, like were a little bit better. I don't like it's not that I don't like a lot of teachers, I don't like their teaching style. I think the teaching and the teachers here are awesome. They're smart. But there's only been like one or two teachers that I think were good at teaching. And there's only been one teacher here that I absolutely loved and would like go beyond to take. And that's Dr. Martin. So that's the only teacher that I think that has. Like, I mean, there's some teachers that are obviously good, but I think that Dr. Martin's probably the only one that would consider great. I hope I'm not sure if we get

upset by that statement. But I don't know, I just feel like there's it's almost like sometimes the teachers here almost they're like, they're so smart. And they're so they know so much about their, their topic and like their area, they can digress into like these weird tangents or just think that it's like, they think a complicated concept can be so easy to them. And it should be taught like so easily. That it's just, that's how they just teach it in their lesson plan. It's just like, Oh, you know, diet, neon, dark period, Shinto ism. And I've shown like, it's just so many different terms that you all want, and there's like, yeah, you should just know that in one class, but I mean, I'm doing well here. So, it's fine.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 22:56

That's good. Do they struggle with like, relatability, then?

Michael Latona 22:59

Yeah, I think it's just like they don't they know material, but they don't know how to present it. And it's almost like since they know it. I mean, that's just my personal opinion. You know, obviously, the graduation rate here is, I think, a little better than average. So, I mean, their materials getting across. But I think the only reason it gets across this because it's really on the student. I think that if I didn't have a good study, you know, I'm studying probably eight to nine hours for like eight to nine hours a day total. Which is a little bit overkill, I think for sure. But if I didn't study that much, or like constantly reread my material, or constantly have to do this, I would not do nearly as good as I've been doing here.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 23:47

So, by studying Do you include like, class time? Or do you outside of class, put that many hours into?

Michael Latona 23:55

I would not include, I guess not include class time. I'm, I'm not taking math is here either, that when I was taking math, I was studying a lot more. So probably this semester, is probably more like six hours of study time. But I would say the average since I started, it would be eight hours a day, like during the week and you know, don't really study that much on weekends. Kind of just relax.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 24:18

Okay, so your, your experience overall here has been positive?

Michael Latona 24:22

Yeah.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 24:23

Just you talk about becoming a teacher yourself. Or you are a teacher. I mean, right now your substitute, right?

Michael Latona 24:30

Yeah. Well, I don't I don't I'm not substituting right now, actually. But I'm doing student observations right now.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 24:37

Okay. So as a teacher, do you think you may be a little bit more sensitive to identifying teaching styles and a little bit more passionate about like, oh, this teaching style is works better for me than this one?

Michael Latona 24:51

Oh, yeah, absolutely. I think that one of the things that should be taught to professors that teach, and doctors at teach at schools is like the multiple intelligences and I think that most know about the multiple intelligences by what's his name number, but like, learning different ways. I mean, I'm pretty good at learning whatever way, like I have my own ways of studying and I think college is more, you know, you're paying for it is your responsibility to learn, like, that's kind of like, how it goes, you don't have to show up for class if you don't want to. So, it's really on you anyway. So, like, I get that. So, I don't really like to complain too much. Even though I've been bashing the teachers here, don't get me wrong Brockport's an awesome school, I would recommend it for sure. I liked it. I like it overall, better than MCC, I'll say that. But I do like I did. I just felt like teachers knew how to teach a little bit better at MCC, they're also dealing with a much more diverse student body, you know, you're dealing with an inner-city student body, you're dealing with much more racially diverse student body. It's just you, you have you're forced to deal with so many new teaching styles, it's almost like you have to adopt them into your lesson plan. And I think here, it's, you know, there are many, there's like a lot of Asian minority a lot of black minority. And then there's, you know, a big white crowd too, but it's almost like, I don't see. I don't know, I just feel like it's not as diverse. And so, the teacher's kind of like have always just done whatever they do in the graduation, like, the graduation rates stay the same. And I mean, I don't know, I've only been here for, you know, three semesters, so I'm kind of just talking from my own experience. But, um, for me, I think that yeah, it wouldn't make a difference, like knowing that, but I definitely think that learning to teach in more than one way is, you know, pretty pivotal to your, your classroom setting. I mean, you can't even graduate and become like a teacher in high school without, without doing that anyone's.

Goehring, Jonathen N (jgoeh1)

Yeah, it definitely isn't very diverse here.

Michael Latona

No. Like it's very, very, almost every single especially like history, department wise, since I'm going to history major education major. It's usually lecture, paper, lecture, lecture, paper, lecture, lecture, paper lecture. So it's just like, which is fine. Like, I learned from it, but it's not like, you know, Dr. Martin's class, it's less than, less than lecture, group work. super unique teaching styles and like, super, like interviewing oral history. And it's just like, it's been so and then like, it's like, oh, Prop, like this unique project and like this, and that it's just, it was so like to see something like that. But I feel like this whole interview just me sucking up to I gotta say something after I got to see some time as well.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 28:01

Did you ever doubt what you want to do?

Michael Latona 28:04

Yeah, I'm here. I wouldn't know about I don't know about doubt. But I definitely had, like, you know, my parents didn't want me to become a teacher. You know, my dad was just like, I came to America for the opportunity to be a doctor, lawyer. So smart. I'm just like, I don't know how smart I am. But I don't want to put that much effort in my education. I don't know. I mean, I don't think doubt I definitely like consider changing it. You know, I considered becoming a business major. I considered, you know, studying math instead of history. But I think I've always wanted to teach, I like kids. I like working with kids. I want to have, you know, hope. I want to have a big family. I want my

own kids. I love my nephews. I like teaching kids and I like I like the challenge of finding out how somebody learns. Like, I like that. I just like to be a mentor in someone's life. You know, I've had people do that for me. So. And it was awesome. And it changed my entire life, how I approached my own education. And without those people, I would not have done that. So, I want to be that person someone's story one day maybe.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 29:21

And do you feel that being here at Brockport, this experience has been equally as valuable as your influences in high school and your time at MCC?

Michael Latona 29:30

That's a really good question. Um, yeah, I think that it has been, it's kind of like, also, I don't know, I also think I'm forced to like my experience here more, because my first semester back, I had to pay for it all out of pocket. Because I made a had. I didn't make too much money, but I basically had I did a full withdraw at some point. So, when I was in, I ended up moving back here for like a little while and I was going to sign up for school and stuff, sign up for MCC for Brockport, I actually did a full withdraw, and I moved back out to California. So, I moved here came back. And so, like because I had a full withdrawal ended up having to pay for it. And so, I liked it a little bit more. And now I'm pretty much paying for my entire experience here out of pocket instead of like coming here for free like I did with MCC because my parents were basically poor. And now that I'm an adult and having to do everything on my own. I think I liked my experience here more because I respect it more because I'm paying for it. And it's like, if I do bad, I have no one to blame but me. And so, it's just like,

you know, I have to focus which is like the pretty good for me, I guess. I don't know.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 30:52

So, it's good for you in that way. But do you think it's the education is just as valuable? As it was at MCC? Or do you feel like you got more out of MCC? And you're just at this point finishing your degree?

Michael Latona 31:07

Um, I don't know. I honestly think it's just because I will say like the professor's here, especially in the history department, every single doctor in the history department gives off this air of super intelligence, like something that is like almost unachievable. I mean, if you talk to Bruce Martin for Bruce Martin, Bruce Leslie, for example, you can ask him like, what do you think of the year 1976 or 1876, and he'll just go off like, some two-hour spiel about, you know, the haze election or this and like the repub. It's just like, he can just go off. And it's just mind blowing how much information that they know. So, I feel like it's almost like they're smarter here. So, I think it's more like, valuable, but at the same, I don't know, it's hard to compare. I think there's different strengths. But I think overall, brought beyond I think it's better.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 32:01

Okay, so you want to be a history teacher? Yeah. Okay. And then what, what age level, or have you not yet decided where you want to teach,

Michael Latona 32:12

um, I wanted to really teach in high school, because that's where I feel like, you know, I think it's a little bit less malleable, but kids are looking

for, you know, the kids that are struggling. I think that almost, in my opinion, for my experiences, a lot of the time that they struggle is they don't really have, you know, the best influences or like they don't know where to put their focus in, in life. And I think that they're looking for a mentor. And a lot of those cases, sometimes they're not, sometimes they're just a troubled child. But I want to be like, I want to be, you know, be able to identify those kids and try and make their lives better. I, although I'm doing observation right now at the middle school level, and I'm having some mixed thoughts. I'm really enjoying my experience at the middle school level too, I think it's awesome, but I don't know, I think that ninth through 12th grade is really where I want to be. My ideal would be like US history, so like 11th grade, or, like prehistory, ninth grade. So

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 33:17

So how much of that is the age of the students versus the content that you use?

Michael Latona 33:25

I don't really care about content.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 33:26

Okay.

Michael Latona 33:26

I love all history. I think it's just about I do love his, like US history. I love teaching US history. I like, you know, I can go off on a huge spiel about how I think reconstruction was the biggest blade, and the biggest, like mishandling that we've ever done. If anything, and it's caused all the racial tensions, I think that everything ties back to

reconstruction, how poorly it was handled. And I can just go off for hours on that, like, but if I had to choose, I think I would probably choose either US history or Yeah, like just US history, medieval or US history, or like Prehistory into medieval times. So, like, either. They're both like my favorite content area. Um, but yeah, I think that the high school grade level would probably be ideal.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 34:18

And do you think this you have your reasons? But do you think that's also partially because that's when you started? Oh, actually attracted to it?

Michael Latona 34:26

Yeah, absolutely. I think that if I didn't, yeah, absolutely.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 34:30

And being here, then, and you talk about the professor's being, you know, very smart. Do you think that that's sort of something that that turns you off a little bit to the college level? That these professors are so smart, yet not as relatable, potentially, depending on the professor, of course, but do you think that turns you off to this level?

Michael Latona 34:51

I think I'm intimidated by a lot of their intelligence, but I don't think like their intelligence levels, but I don't think it turns me off. I think that what turns me off is the fact that they just don't have a lot of diverse teaching methods. Um, you know, there's also a couple professors here that are just absolute. just terrible. And, you know, I don't want to name names, but one of them is retired, retiring this, like this coming year is just no matter what you do in his class, he always gives you a

B. And he just should not be teaching. So, stuff like that is what turns me off. You know, not having a diverse, educated not, not having a diverse classroom potentially turns me off. Like, you know, one of my favorite things is peer to peer discussion, peer to peer reviews, group projects, like just diverse, like lectures are good too. I mean, whatever has just, I feel like a lot of classes can be stagnant. And I think that's the biggest thing that turns me off. Not, you know, intelligence. I've always had like, you. No, I think my mom is extremely smart. She got she's got her bachelor's degree, and she got it literally. While, she was waitressing when I was a kid going to night school, and it was just it's impressive to see that. So, I've always had like, a strong presence of like, you know, people, my sister is also just miles smarter than me. Which is, you know, I gotta try to be smart. Sometimes it just comes other people naturally. But my sister I mean, she graduated and was teaching but she was teaching at SU, su VU cv and knowing at the University of Buffalo, she was teaching there at 25. So, she graduated with her doctorates when she was 25, which is like, ridiculous. It was in theater. And like some, like, Art theater history, or something, I don't know. But she's ridiculous. Super intimidating. And, and, and super, like, she's only she's 26 or 25. Now, but she just graduated last, but she was teaching there before she like right before she graduated, and top there until, like, last semesters or last time teaching that and she moved back to move back to the area. But yeah, I think intelligence can be intimidating, but it's definitely not a turn off things. Like the word turn with turn, turn on is not right here. But I think it's definitely a something that would bring students here, I think, you know, but yeah, it can be intimidating, but definitely not a reason I wouldn't want to come here or wouldn't want like wouldn't, you know, suggest to somebody else?

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 37:46

Well, you seem to have a really like a clear path of where you're going. And a lot of students here, you know, are still have no idea.

Michael Latona 37:56

That's kind of the fun of college.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 37:57

That's true. Yeah. So, does that what does that make your experience different? Just knowing where you want to go? And being around students who might also just be like, I don't know, what the heck I want to do.

Michael Latona 38:07

Yeah, I think that I'm very focused and driven. And like what I want, when I want to graduate, like what I want to do, you know, I don't necessarily do, you know, whatever. When I came here to, I didn't want to, you know, one of my first rules, I didn't want to, like date anybody or anything like that, which lasted about a semester. So, you know, it's just like, the only distraction I really have, I would say, is my girlfriend, and she is about 15,000 times smarter than me, and super intimidating, and like, yells at me for not doing homework, and she's kind of a terror, but she's awesome. And I love her. I hope she doesn't hear this. But anyways, uh, yeah, so the only distraction? I would, I would say that I have here is, like a girlfriend. Balance time around that, obviously. But, um, yeah, I feel like, it's a lot like, I'm definitely like being driven stuff. My experience is completely, it's definitely different. But I mean, even if I if I didn't know what I wanted to do. I don't know, it's kind of hard to think like that. It's kind of hard to think in a scenario if I didn't know what I wanted to do. What I would explore. Yeah, I don't know. I think that it's a very like, I think I view this college experience almost more like a job. Like I had to get it done a job that

I'm paying to be at, which is just horrible. But it's like, Yeah, I just want to I do definitely just like, I think my attitudes more like, I just want to get it over with I want to be teaching. Which, yeah.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 39:48

So, if you look back, do you ever look back and think of anything that you would have done differently?

Michael Latona 39:55

Oh, yeah, definitely. When I'm like, pick my nose in a book or in front of Jenny, this girl had a crush on ninth grade. definitely wouldn't have done a whole bunch of stuff. I didn't. But not, not like post. I don't know. I think that my experiences, even my bad one's kind of made me who I am. Um, I definitely wouldn't have gotten married. That was a terrible idea. I got married pretty young. And then came divorce in California.

Well, yeah, with not I wasn't married in California, but I, I knew a girl and one when I came back here, we ended up getting married. And it was just a terrible idea. And didn't last very long and probably would definitely not done that. But that probably sent me back. I mean, send me back a bunch of money and sent me back a bunch of time. But, yeah, but education wisely. I think, I think maybe not taking a five-year break, maybe. But I had a lot of fun in my five-year break. And, you know, I wish I took maybe some money management classes, I made a lot of money, doing some stupid stuff, spend a lot of money doing stupid stuff, I would have definitely liked to have some money left, you know, after all of that, but you know, now, I think maybe the break, I would have maybe finished right away. But now I don't really regret anything that I didn't in the education, besides embarrassing myself in front of crashes or stuff like that.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 41:34

So, when are you going to be done here?

Michael Latona 41:36

I should be done in three more semesters.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 41:41

So, after this one, so after that What are you planning on doing?

Michael Latona 41:45

I don't know. I want to get into teaching right away, but you need to get a master's within five years. So, I want to get certified. I'm gonna work on my certification over the summer, though, because you can I'm pretty sure if I'm not mistaken, you can actually do your certification. Like the tests required for your certification without actually having your degree. So, I'm gonna look into getting like look at what steps there are for me for that. That way once I get my masters will just be done. But you have to get your masters within five years teaching I think something like that. Which means more school more money, but yeah, hopefully teach right away. That thought about like moving south, and stuff like that. But I think I'd miss being in New York, I like it here as much as everyone's like, Oh, I want to get out of here.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 42:39

What was it about New York that you liked so much?

Michael Latona 42:42

Um, mainly family. I think, you know, it's pretty like New York City, too, is like I go there all the time. I think it's probably one of my favorite places to go. To changes like weather. The seasons, you know, I love living in California but I missed the seasons. Yeah, pretty much that mainly family.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 43:08

Wonderful. So, you have anything else that you feel like this interview would be?

Michael Latona 43:15

I feel like we should just like insult Dr. Martin Academy, just because I just talked to him so much.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 43:20

What was the worst moment that you ever had with Dr. Martin?

Michael Latona 43:23

Well, one time I was late to class and she beat me for three minutes with the baton just like bloody it was she told me not to tell anybody.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 43:31

And yeah, I in the world actually happened. So?

Michael Latona 43:39

I don't know. I think the worst time actually, I do have a worse moment with her. She called on me I was I literally cringe about this. Sometimes. She called on a once in a class. And I had read the wrong reading. And when I answered she was like, you didn't even read the reading. She's like Michael Latona, and they and I used to do all my readings. And I would basically answer every class and try and be a teacher's pet. But I read the wrong one. And she's like, what can read the wrong one? And I was just like, No, I've upset her. But that's probably the worst phone is terrible. That's it. Yeah, I don't think she still she might not even remember she probably doesn't. But I do.

Goehring, Jonathan N (jgoeh1) 44:21

Awesome. Hey, thank you so much.

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