

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 00:01

So, this is Keegan Leslie-Taylor interviewing Da'juan Steele.

Da'juan Steele 00:05

Da'juan, yes.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 00:06

Da'juan. Sorry, excuse me. Da'juan, on September 28 2019 within my house. So, Da'juan, can you tell me about your family background?

Da'juan Steele 00:17

Okay, I come from a Latino and a black background. My mother is Mexican and Puerto Rican, my father is black. And I was raised in the inner city. And I was an only child until I was 13. And I have two younger siblings.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 00:39

So where in the city did you live?

Da'juan Steele 00:41

On the east side of Rochester. I grew up Portland Avenue area of Bay Street, Goodman, Hudson Avenue area, all over the east side.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 00:48

So, you moved around a lot?

Da'juan Steele 00:49

Yeah, growing up.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 00:51

Did that ever get in the way of school?

Da'juan Steele 00:54

No, I went to the same elementary school from kindergarten to sixth grade then I went to East High School from seventh to twelfth so I never really had to change schools, nothing like that.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 01:05

What's your family's background like for schooling?

Da'juan Steele 01:09

So I am the first to go to college out of my family. Um, my grandmother is a nurse practitioner. She graduated from MCC. My father, he never finished, my mom. She never finished. And I'm the oldest of my two younger siblings. So yeah, I think my grandmother on my mom's side went to Alfred for culinary. Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 01:39

So who was it that influenced you to actually go to college?

Da'juan Steele 01:42

My father's parents. My grandfather's a pastor. And like I said, my grandmother, she was a nurse practitioner. They were the ones who had a lot of heavy influence on me exceeding my education, you know, just progressing after high school, wanting to make something of myself. They have an outreach Community Center on Genesee Street and they want me to kind of like take over when they pass on. So they want me to have a college degree and they want me to get myself you know, situated before you know, it's time for them to go and for me to take over basically.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 02:19

Set yourself up for success. That's good. So, what can you tell me about your high school experiences? What kind of student were you?

Da'juan Steele 02:21

Yes. Okay, so at East High School, um, it was a big transition coming from a small elementary school, 25 school. To going to East High School, you know, 12th graders, seniors and kids, six foot and above I was a little short guy in high school. I was like 5' 7", I'm only like 5' 9" right now.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 02:45

I feel your pain, man.

Da'juan Steele 03:05

I played sports, I played baseball, I played volleyball, kind of nerd, love like anime, love video games, and love sports. I wasn't like an honor student, really. I had, was a 3.0 honor? I wasn't a high honor roll student. I had a 3.0 GPA. Well, wasn't like high honor. Oh, I wasn't like 4.0-ish. Um, but throughout High School. Um, I've been a pretty consistent person always laid back. Not really trying to be that popular guy. I stayed with a tight circle of friends from like sports team from like baseball team. I'm always been very inquisitive. According to my teachers. I was a poet. I don't really write too much poetry now. But I used to write a lot in high school.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 03:49

So is there anything that you got involved in? And obviously sports and what not, because I see here you're a senior youth health advocate right now.

Da'juan Steele 03:56

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 03:57

Did you get involved that in high school?

Da'juan Steele 03:58

Yeah. So in seventh grade, I started working for Action for a Better Community. So I was about 12, or 13. So started off as a youth health advocate. So we're out. We were educating the youth on adolescent safe sexual health. So we're passing out condom packs, or encouraging them to come get tested for HIV and STDs. And we're asking them, you know, do you know where you can get tested? Asking youth just about their general knowledge about you know, safe sex. And what do they know about STDs and HIV. And do they know where to get help? Do they know where they can get resources? So I started as an advocate in '07. And I started out volunteering. And as the years went on, as I gained experience, I got hired in 2018, when I was old enough to, not 2018, I got hired when I turned 18. And I started full time recently, and I like my position, I stepped up to the senior position.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 05:02

So you were as sort of a seventh grader were you going up to the seniors, and like, Hey,

here's a condom. What do you know about this kind of stuff?

Da'juan Steele 05:09

No I just really sticking amongst, you know, my, my peers, the younger crowd, I don't really know too many older seniors when I was a seventh grader. I was kind of kind of shell shocked. Like just seeing, because they were they were nuts. Like at East High School. They were going crazy, like fights all the time, a lot of violence, gang activity. And it was kind of intimidating. I didn't really know if I could just walk up to somebody who was a senior and ask them about it. And I was just starting out too, so I would just keep them in my locker

and just tell my buddies like, hey, if you guys need any condoms, I have em in my locker. If you want to come see what I do at work. You're more than welcome.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 05:49

Yes, spread the word among your peers at that point. Well that's good.

Da'juan Steele 05:52

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 05:53

So what is your attitude before coming to college? So, did you, did you feel like you were prepared for going because you went to MCC first before Brockport? What do you feel like you prepared for MCC?

Da'juan Steele 06:02

Um, I came in there and I didn't know what I want to do coming out of high school. I switched my major like three times. I wanted to do psychology then business, and I wanted to teach. So I feel like my counselor in high school could have done a better job with her advisement as far as what I should have done because she knew what I did for work. She knew what I was starting to do she could have said, you should major in something in the sexual health field or human resources or, but she was like no, go for Liberal Arts and then just get a general feel for what you want. And really just waste your

time.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 06:38

Yeah.

Da'juan Steele 06:38

Waste your money. So I ended up spending like three years at MCC, when I should have just did two plus two. And I actually got accepted into Alfred State coming out of high school but I decided to just take the MCC route. Just because I didn't know what I want to do. I didn't know if I was ready to leave the house and be on my own. And yeah, I wasn't sure yet.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 07:02

It just seemed easier to go to MCC because it's well, a cheaper school and its also local, at that. So did you go to the downtown campus?

Da'juan Steele 07:09

I went to both. Downtown and Brighton.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 07:11

Okay, so what was the biggest difference you felt from your first semester of college versus high school? How, how were they different for you?

Da'juan Steele 07:23

My first semester at MCC versus high school. I definitely had a lot more responsibility. And when I got that first refund check, I bought my first car, it was a pickup truck. Um, I definitely had to learn to stop procrastinating when it came to homework. And like I had to be on top of my stuff. Um, I learned when I took the acu-placement test at MCC that I needed to like really sharpen up on some math skills because math was always my weakest area.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 07:56

I feel your pain, I really do.

Da'juan Steele 07:57

I hate math. Yeah, it was just making that transition It wasn't easy, but had to be done.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 08:11

Absolutely, I hear that. So, obviously your, your, so your priorities you were procrastinating for your time management. And so that actually had to step up your game with that.

Da'juan Steele 08:18

Yep, Yep.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 08:19

How so?

Da'juan Steele 08:20

So, not waiting till Sunday night to do my work the day before school starts like using my time in between classes to do homework, utilizing the library, just being smart about my stuff and not going to play ball or not going to chill with friends not playing video games more than doing homework. So kind of buckle down.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 08:42

So when you first got to college and everything did you ever feel like anyone's gonna judge you just because well, you're darker, I mean your ethnicity. Did that ever come into play?

Da'juan Steele 08:50

Yeah, absolutely. Um, my grandparents told me when I was young, like you're college material, don't let anybody tell you otherwise. And you know, you're, you're black in white America and you know, you're going against the grain just by wanting to educate yourself. And the cards are always going to be stacked against you but you have to be resilient and face adversity then and that's just how life is they always wanted me to be mentally prepared for that you know?

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:22

Well it certainly seems like it seems like you've risen above it.

Da'juan Steele 09:26

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:27

Especially seeing how you're still at Brockport and doing well. So, you kind of mentioned when you know you the financial situation was cheaper at MCC.

Da'juan Steele 09:36

Yep.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:36

How did you end up paying for college? You have to take out loans, something like that?

Da'juan Steele 09:39

Loans. Loans, yep.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:40

Lots and lots of loans.

Da'juan Steele 09:41

Yeah

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:41

Like federal student aid?

Da'juan Steele 09:43

Federal student aid, yep.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:44

So Stafford loans, all that fun stuff.

Da'juan Steele 09:46

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:46

Did you get any grants?

Da'juan Steele 09:48

I got TAP and Pell. Um, yeah, just pretty much TAP and Pell.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:55

Yeah. At least those ones you don't have to pay back.

Da'juan Steele 09:58

Right.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 09:58

Makes life easy for you. So you already had this job as an advocate, did that ever get in the way with school? Like, did it help you out in school? Did it clash?

Da'juan Steele 10:07

Okay. Are you talking about high school, or college?

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 10:09

Uh, college.

Da'juan Steele 10:10

Um, did you get in the way? No, because my boss, she was really lenient. And she knew that I was pursuing college, she was very excited for me. And she would even let me use some of my office time to get some homework done. If I had like, if we weren't doing anything or important for the day. So I felt like she was very supportive. And no, it didn't really get in the way, no.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 10:35

Gotcha. So you obviously you said you played pretty much all American in High School playing sports, playing every sport you could. So you don't play it says here you don't play any now in college. What do, what do you do for fun outside of college then?

Da'juan Steele 10:48

Outside, I go to Cobb's Hill and play basketball. And my older brother. He just finished at Brockport. His name is Michael Carson. He is a professional kickboxer. So he's always all our life. He's been trying to like try his new moves on me. He's a third degree black belt in Taekwondo. So we're always in the gym, always training doing whatever like routine he just put up, put together. This guy's a workaholic. So it's either basketball, I go for a jog in the park or in the gym.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 11:19

You have a big competition with him through all that.

Da'juan Steele 11:22

More like a sibling rivalry, but not nothing too serious. Like he would always try to push me to make sure I would be prepared for any situation if he wouldn't be there. Kind of like, we're not we're not blood brothers. But like, he's like my best friend since childhood kind of thing. So but he went to Wilson, I went to East High School. So he knew that it would be kind of tough for me. And I was a shorter guy. I didn't have the Taekwondo background, so he would always try to teach me whatever he knew whenever he could. And still to this day, yes, like when I do my spare time. So.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 11:58

That sounds fun at, least.

Da'juan Steele 11:59

Yeah. It is fun.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 12:00

And keeps you in shape, too.

Da'juan Steele 12:01

Yeah, I get to eat whatever and still work out and people are like, how do you eat all this food? You don't get fat? My metabolism? Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 12:13

So it was easier to find friends in high school or college?

Da'juan Steele 12:19

In high school, I'm really to myself, like, people barely know me at Brockport. I'm saying it was the same at MCC. I was really just to myself trying to stick to my studies and just be focused. In high school is much easier because I was on the baseball team I was the captain of JV. And I played volleyball and high school it was a smaller environment compared to college campus, of course.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 12:47

Okay. So, um, when you first going from MCC to Brockport, what kind of school

did you think Brockport was? And has your opinion of it changed at all?

Da'juan Steele 12:57

I just always heard it was a party school. My brother was out there, he would always invite me to the parties out there. And he told me like, yeah, there's, there's some people out there who are probably borderline, you know, racist or prejudiced. And there was the incident where somebody spray painted the N word on the campus or something like I don't know, what happened, but they didn't change my perspective on it. Like as I when I went there, I just took it for what it was. And you know, just take every day one day at a time,

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 13:27

Right. You're just judging the college based on the college not the people attending it then.

Da'juan Steele 13:31

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 13:32

Because not everyone's gonna be the same way.

Da'juan Steele 13:33

Exactly.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 13:35

So, while being at Brockport, have you found any intimate relationships, or do you have a crush on anybody? Something along those lines?

Da'juan Steele 13:41

Oh, no, I'm actually engaged.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 13:43

Are you?

Da'juan Steele 13:43

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 13:44

And how long has that been going on?

Da'juan Steele 13:45

So we've been engaged for two years. I have a one year old. And my fiance, she works at a nursing home. So she's going to start MCC when I finish Brockport in May.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 13:56

Okay.

Da'juan Steele 13:57

So, yeah, so I'm not really I haven't been looking for any chicks or anything on campus.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 14:01

Must make life a little easier for you. Less distracting.

Da'juan Steele 14:03

Yeah. Yeah, really have to stick to my you know, stick to my guns and keep tunnel vision.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11)

Where did you meet her?

Da'juan Steele 14:13

Where did I meet her? At work at ABC.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 14:12

Oh, nice.

Da'juan Steele 14:13

She came in for an interview for a job, but she didn't stay long. But we clicked we ended up having a baby and my boss is looking at me like you've been working for me since 2007. Preaching safe sex, use condoms. And you couldn't wait you just had a baby! And I was like, yeah Mary. Like, Sorry. I don't want to be 30 having a baby. So, just..

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 14:21

I can understand that

Da'juan Steele 14:37

just turned 24 yesterday. So

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F

So you were born in 95?

Da'juan Steele

Yep, September 27, 95.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 14:44

Well thats got to make life easier. You don't have to worry about chasing women. Or them chasing you.

Da'juan Steele 14:50

Yeah. Because I get hit on a lot like not trying to toot my own horn.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 14:54

By all means, toot away.

Da'juan Steele 14:56

I don't gotta worry about none of that, distractions because I got one at home, so.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 15:01

So which, which college? Did you feel like had the harder work MCC or Brockport?

Da'juan Steele 15:05

Definitely Brockport.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 15:06

How so?

Da'juan Steele 15:07

Well, as far as doing research papers and using doing citations and just the little the little picky things that professors expect out of you. In the history department at Brockport, compared to MCC you feel like you can get away with a lot more.

They weren't as picky. And the work is, I don't want to say it's tougher work. But it's not the same it's definitely increased level of difficulty, if you will, at Brockport. So yeah,

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 15:39

You feel that's because the classes are bit smaller at MCC, say a little more impersonal at Brockport?

Da'juan Steele 15:45

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 15:46

I understand that. So was that, is that the first time you ever had like a lecture hall of 190 people?

Da'juan Steele 15:54

What do you mean?

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 15:55

For the size of the class.

Da'juan Steele 15:57

I've never even been in a lecture hall. And haven't still.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 16:00

Well, that's probably because the, the program you're in now.

Da'juan Steele 16:03

Right.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 16:03

So which is at Brockport, what exactly is it?

Da'juan Steele 16:06

So I'm in the History define a childhood education. So and I'm minoring in English, so

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 16:15

Well, you mentioned you like doing poetry?

Da'juan Steele 16:17

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 16:18

How are you liking your English classes?

Da'juan Steele 16:20

The English classes. So I'm taking one called Black poets this semester. And it's really interesting professor, she's making connections between poets like Langston Hughes with Kendrick Lamar. And it's really interesting to see their perspective, you know, from somebody from eighty years ago, somebody right now living in our current time. And the class dynamic is really interesting too. We have, I think I'm the only black male. And there's like, two other black young ladies. And the rest of the classes are white kids. And it's interesting to see their perspective on hip hop, and you know, black culture and music. But the professor's cool. She's awesome, good energy.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 17:04

So you were saying you're learning their perspective on hip hop and whatnot? What have you learned about that?

Da'juan Steele 17:08

Um, the aesthetics of hip hop, the aesthetics of music and poetry in general, and how the word 'aesthetic' means to appreciate the beauty of art, and how hip hop has so many different forms, like you have breakdancing and you have DJ and you have graffiti. And people think it's only

rap music. And there's so many different dynamics that go along to it. But throughout throughout the years, like it's been watered down and commercialized. And now the message that was originally intended when it first came out, is now you know, wash watered down. And it's not the same, like it used to be in the 80s, you know, power to the people kind of thing with, you know, create knowledge of self. And now it's like, turn out party do drugs. Big Booty hoes, this that, you know,

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 18:04

So advocating for the things that, that you're trying to help prevent, basically. So what was your perspective of your white peers? in the class? What was it? What did you learn from them? What they thought?

Da'juan Steele 18:15

Well, it's interesting, that Professor actually played a YouTube video of a Kendrick Lamar concert. And she did the same thing with the Kanye West concert. And they were both performing songs that had that were pertaining to, like, you know, black slavery, suffering and oppression. And to hear how they, they were conscious of what he was saying, was, it was kind of surprising, because sometimes I feel like a lot of the students, they're not naive to what's going on, but they know, like, they know their history. And they know that since Trump is in office, that they still can kind of look down on black students or look at us, like we don't belong, or like, we're still beneath them. Like, it's, it goes as far as not saying, excuse me, when you walk by somebody, or like, I don't know.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 19:13

That must be really annoying.

Da'juan Steele 19:14

Yeah, just like little things like that. It doesn't really bother me, in hindsight, just I was always raised to use my manners. And I just feel like everybody's brought up different. But, um, the white kids in my class, I can tell that they definitely appreciate black culture and black art.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 19:34

That's good, at least. Looking outside of their own purview at that point. That's good. So while you've been in school, what do you plan to do with your degree, do you have any plans is as a senior health advocate or do you have any other goals, in mind?

Da'juan Steele 19:48

so I plan to go teach in the inner city, where I came up probably, hopefully right at 25 School if I can, and I want to teach third or fourth grade, going to be social studies teacher or teach all four core subjects.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 20:01

So what so you want to do the younger, younger kids?

Da'juan Steele 20:05

Yeah

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 20:06

So you want to do, let's say, kindergarten through six?

Da'juan Steele 20:11

No, maybe like third or fourth.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 20:13

Get them while they're young?

Da'juan Steele 20:14

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 20:14

While their minds are sponges?

Da'juan Steele 20:16

Yeah, because when I, the ones I teach at work, the ones we advocate to their age is 13 to 24.

And by the time their adolescent, you know, they got their mind made up. So they're going

to do what they want, at the end of the day. And I remember being in fourth and fifth

grade. And we had a teacher named Mr. QB, he would have a stand up and speak

affirmations out loud. And when we were young, we didn't understand why he was doing

it, he would like write it out on the chalkboard and say, repeat after me. We would say like, I am

somebody, I am beautiful, I am going to be successful. I am a leader. And we would just

like repeat stuff like that out loud. And that always just resonated with me like speaking

that into existence. And as I grew older, learning about how the law of attraction works in

the universe, and I just felt like that was real deep. I felt like maybe my purpose, one of my

purposes in life is to inspire the youth. I've gotten some experience working at it's called

the Freedom School, and it's on Goodman Street. So it's a non for profit. And it's a reading

literacy program. So all the staff there are black, all the all the youth, they're like, you know,

Inner City Youth minority mixed all different diversities. And I had the youngest bunch of

kids I had, I think they were five to eight year olds. And I had like, 15 in the class here I can pull up a

little picture actually. And I spent two summers there, and they loved me. And I felt like I felt like I really inspired them. Like I felt like I really instilled something positive in them, even though it was just a reading literacy program, we were teaching them how to read. These are my students right here.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 21:59

Oh yeah, that's a very eclectic bunch right there.

Da'juan Steele 22:01

Yeah, they were. They were rowdy that summer.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 22:03

I bet!

Da'juan Steele 22:05

So I just felt like, you know, what, if I can just do this as my day job, then it wouldn't be something I would just go for just for a check. You know?

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 22:11

It'd be something you actually enjoy.

Da'juan Steele 22:13

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 22:14

It's never work at that point. When you actually enjoy it.

Da'juan Steele 22:16

Exactly.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 22:18

So you had mentioned your teacher, who would have you say those affirmations that really helped build a lot of confidence for you at that point?

Da'juan Steele 22:24

Oh, my God, now that I look at it, yeah. Even though I was always shy. I just never realized the impact it really had, had on me. Because I would look, I would look myself in the mirror and say, and I would just feel it manifesting. Even though I wouldn't see the results immediately that I wanted to, like, I couldn't just go Super Saiyan in high school and be this big jock guy that everybody respected. Even though my brother over at Wilson is freaking homecoming king, prom king, all city wrestling champion. I'm like, damn, you know what I mean?

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 22:57

Yeah.

Da'juan Steele 22:58

And it's like, that's why it's the poetry, I would just write my affirmations down, and hope it would manifest that way, you know, speaking to myself. And sure enough, little by little, I started to progress. So.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 23:11

That's good. Every little thing can help at that point.

Da'juan Steele 23:14

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 23:15

And then well, as you said, you want to put that on to the younger kids nowadays, you know, help them build up their confidence.

Da'juan Steele 23:21

Exactly.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 23:23

So who's had the biggest influence on you in college like a professor or something like that? Any individuals? And if they had an influence on you, do you think they'll have an impact on you in the years come as well?

Da'juan Steele 23:35

Biggest impact on me in college...? I had a professor at MCC named Professor Graham, Takeia Graham, she was an older black lady, very nice, was for an English class. And she was one of my favorite professors. She just told me to, not to go through life, regretting something like not not to not to go through life, wishing you could have done something. Like don't have all these regrets. Wishing you could have done something and not going for it. She always told me, she started telling me to take chances. You know, take risks, and to be wise about it. But to not not to hold myself back. And still to this day, like she contacts my mom on Facebook, she saw my mom post a picture of me and she was like, I just have to let you know, he was one of my favorite students in class. And like all I don't even have Facebook. My mom was just telling me, Is this one of your professors? Oh Professor Graham! yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 24:43

That's cool. So, did you feel like that helped you be more assertive, having her as a Professor?

Da'juan Steele 24:49

Yeah. Um, that that was again, when I was in MCC, I was still a little unsure of what I wanted to do. And when she was telling me to, not to not to be afraid to take risks, I definitely wanted to assert myself ahead and put myself in a position where I wanted to see myself, you know, five or 10 years in the future being successful. So I was, yeah, definitely became more assertive.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 25:17

That's good. So, is there anything looking back, because you've already gone through a whole lot of college right now. Looking back, is there anything that you would do differently? You look at your younger self and go, what are you doing?! And what would you tell yourself?

Da'juan Steele 25:33

Yeah, I wouldn't have got tied down to a girl in ninth grade and had a high school sweetheart.

From ninth grade to 12th grade. I wouldn't have done that. And I felt like I should have tried out for more sports, because it was so hard to get a scholarship in baseball and volleyball. Like, if I want to try it out for basketball, or football or wrestling or anything else. Yeah, if I can go back, I would definitely do that differently.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 26:06

Why was it so hard to get a scholarship for like volleyball and whatnot?

Da'juan Steele 26:10

In baseball, in volleyball I was a setter. So I wasn't really the guy jumping up getting the spikes, my serves were pretty good. But and we weren't really a popular team compared to like the schools and like Victor or you know, like McQuaid, Aquinas, they weren't really scouting for, you know, at East, they just were looking at us for like basketball and football. And it was, it was so competitive to get a spot on the team because there was so much talent, and I just didn't have the size.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 26:37

Right.

Da'juan Steele 26:37

Which created the doubt. So

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 26:41

You just didn't have the size and whatnot compared to everyone else. Well, it's a big pool of people to choose from at that point too.

Da'juan Steele 26:48

Yeah.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 26:48

So it kind of felt like you were good at... You, what did you feel like? You weren't good enough at that point?

Da'juan Steele 26:53

Yeah, it was intimidating seeing these other guys. They had the size and the skill. And I

just, I felt like I wasn't ready. And when I got cut from the basketball team in seventh grade, I was like, yeah, I'm not even gonna try out again. And that's something I would go back and redo. Should've just tried out the next season.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 27:13

So once you graduate here, do you intend to do anything like a master's degree, anything like that? Where do you plan on going for your masters?

Da'juan Steele 27:21

Probably right back to Brockport might take like a semester or two off. But yeah, if I'm gonna I have to pursue the Masters to go teach.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 27:30

And you want to stay, are you going to plan on staying being a senior youth advocate?

Da'juan Steele 27:37

So actually,

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 27:38

While attending masters and everything?

Da'juan Steele 27:40

I age out of this position when I turned 25. So then I'll be moving on to a different branch of ABC. So um, when I transition to the different branch, then I'll have to see how it would work out with the master's program and being able to teach in the city. So I haven't really planned that out yet, because I don't know who my new next boss will be.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 28:02

Okay.

Da'juan Steele 28:03

So I've had this relationship with my boss since 2007. So she's all she's always known my school schedule. And you know what I would be doing for college, so I was always able to would

have flex time. So I'm always able to work my school schedule around my work schedule.

When I find out who my new boss or supervisor will be, then I'll be able to work that out

with the master's program and stuff. So

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 28:27

Awesome. Well, that's actually been very enlightening. I want to thank you very much for coming over

Da'juan Steele 28:32

Thank you.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 28:33

And giving me this story. It's been awesome.

Da'juan Steele 28:35

Thank you.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 28:37

I hope you the best success as well.

Da'juan Steele 28:38

I appreciate it. Likewise.

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 28:40

You seem to be doing really well right now.

Da'juan Steele 28:42

Thank you

Leslie-Taylor, Keegan F (kles11) 28:43

And please keep at it.

Da'juan Steele 28:44

I will. Nice to meet you, man.