

SCHEDLER HONORS COLLEGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Mylon Boston Oral History Interview Transcription

Narrator Name: Boston, Mylon

Interviewer Name: Trujillo, Dianne

Date of Interview: 03/09/2022

Location of Interview: Conway, AR (Remote Interview - Zoom Recording)

Acronyms:

DT= Dianne Trujillo

MB=Mylon Boston

UCA= University of Central Arkansas

ACT= American College Testing

HBCU= Historically Black Colleges & Universities

AP= Advanced Placement

GPA= Grade Point Average

FAFSA= Free Application for Student Aid

U.S.= United States

Interview Summary

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Mylon Boston conducted by Dianne Trujillo on March 8th [Interviewer meant 9th], 2022. This interview is part of the Schedler Honors College Oral History Project.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

DT [Dianne Trujillo] [00:00:05] This is Diane Trujillo with the Schedler Honors College Oral History Project. Today is March 8th, 2022 and I am interviewing Mylon Boston, who is at his home in Conway, Arkansas. We will be talking about Mylon's experience leading up to during and after their time in the Schedler Honors College. Please state your name and age for the recording.

MB [Mylon Boston] [00:00:27] Mylon Issac, Boston, age 23.

DT [00:00:31] And when did you enter the honors college or what year?

MB [00:00:36] 2016, I was the 2016 cohort.

DT [00:00:39] When did you graduate from the Honors College?

MB [00:00:42] 2020. May 2020.

DT [00:00:45] All right. So, Mylon, where are you originally from?

MB [00:00:50] I am originally from Crossett, Arkansas. It is Southeastern Arkansas. It is about fifteen minutes away from the Arkansas Louisiana line. I'm not nowhere near it about takes about two hours to get to Little Rock and it is two and a half hours to get to Conway. So imagine my trips going back home to see the family back and forth, but [laugh] not to long compared to some other people, but it's really down there. I like to call it before the South of the deep South. It's home and I love it. I still miss a little bit but that's a little about Crossett. I'm always gonna love Crossett till the day I die so.

DT [00:01:32] [Laugh] Gotcha. Is it a big or a small city?

MB [00:01:37] Is about six or seven thousand, so I would say is relatively small. A lot of people just go off of graduation class number and so I was in the class of a hundred and twenty five from my high school graduation class. A lot of people say, well, that's pretty small and well I just go by small town. We don't have any malls or anything. We have to go to Louisiana to shop so I think that said a lot about the city, about the size, and everything like that [laughs]. But yeah, I would say with a population around six, seven, eight thousand is, I would say, relatively in the middle of small and medium.

DT [00:02:21] Gotcha. Then how would you describe your high school since you you know graduated with the class of a hundred and twenty five around there [crosstalk] –

MB – [crosstalk] Right.

DT What was it like?

MB [00:02:28] It was good. First of all, I mean, if not it it was a total, especially for high schools a total of about five hundred students. So it was one of those things where you were just a a small fish in a big pond. Everybody basically knew each other, and that's really how Crossett is. A lot of people know each other. They went to school together. They work together and even classmates from forty years ago they still know each other and are relatively close. And so it was basically one big happy family. And sometimes it was there that everybody knew each other cause [laugh] you could never [unclear] any privacy at some

points but it was a great experience, I really enjoyed my time there. I feel I got the change to do everything I wanted to do, which wasn't a lot. I always had this I want to say jealousy, but considering that my other cohorts in their schools and all the stuff they had going on, I never had opportunities to experience some of those things. But it was a blessing in total.

I'm—A lot of people say I walk of history. I am one of nine African-American students on a graduate study of class in high school, and that's the most they've had in history. In in one graduation, so I'm very proud of the success I have proud of the journey. And, they they actually tore down the old high school I was in and they actually built a new one about two or three years ago. So it's not really no way I can just walk around and see my old stomping grounds. I haven't even been to the new school, [laugh] I mean I always I always have a find joy of Crossett High School, all the laughs we had, all of the, the future stuff went on and all the opportunities it gave me. I don't regret it for the world I always have love for them.

DT [00:04:35] OK, so going from a place that was kind of where you knew everybody, what was it like thinking about where you were going to go to school? Did you know that you wanted to come to Conway or what was that like?

MB [00:04:51] I had in mind, Conway but I did not want to leave the state of Arkansas. I wanted to be relatively close to family, but not too close. So a couple schools were in mind, but I'm glad you asked that because it really UCA [University of Central Arkansas] was, I believe it was number one on my list.

I was definitely trying to get some scholarships from there. But I am a twin. I have a twin brother named Michael and my family was relatively middle class, closer to upper middle

class than lower middle class. But I always thought that there was no way they were going to be able to put two kids through school. So that's how when I was doing the ACT [American College Testing] and trying to make sure I had a high score to get the scholarship. But I wasn't governor's distinguished like a lot of my cohorts [laugh] like the rest of my cohort was.

But that's really when I looked into UCA and actually Patricia sent me an email about the honors cause I had never heard of before. I really just that email really set forth me going to UCA and I can spend more about the later questions if you would like. But [laugh] I know I know you probably have a lot more questions for me, but that's really how I got into UCA was that email. I remember the day and everything.

UCA was definitely the top choice. I had well I wouldn't say a lot of offers, but I had a scholarship elsewhere. But I did want to go to Conway because I have family here. I have a couple aunts and couple of cousins that live here. And so my sister also lives here as well. So was definitely not too far away from family. Someone can always check on me if she was to happen. So.

DT [00:06:40] OK, and then just out of curiosity, did your brother plan on coming to UCA as well or?

MB [00:06:47] He did not. He thought about going to the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, but I don't think he was very fond of us splitting up. When it was decided I was going to UCA, he was like, "Well I'll go to UCA too." He never regrets that decision, and I'm pretty sure he had a good time here as well. I mean we're still close, that's my brother so. He

definitely—I know he always said his first thought was the University of Pine Bluff, mainly because it was an HBCU [Historically Black Colleges & Universities.] He wanted to have that experience but he did come and join me at UCA. I was thankful for that because you were definitely an anchor who always stood beside me. So I'm glad he was there with me for this journey.

DT [00:07:39] OK, and then, what careers or majors did you kind of want to pursue before coming to college? Did you have a plan?

MB [00:07:52] Well, I had a plan, a little bit of it, when I was in fifth grade, that was around the time of former President Barack Obama had got inaugurated as the president of the United States. And at that time, I was always so focused on that because in Crosset, I never had the opportunity to see people of color take on those kind of leadership roles and be in the city government and everything. When he got inaugurated, it was for the father me to just go out and try to do a lot of service work and get involved and see if I can do the work in government or even political politicians and everything like that.

When I—before I came to UCA I looked up the political majors online. I saw political science department. What I didn't want to study political science, it was more political science in practice. I thought to myself, “Well, what could I do with a political science degree that could also give me a job in state government if I would like to? Or even federal government?” I noticed in the political science program they have a public administration degree and that really spoke to everything I wanted to look for in a program to ask questions like, “Do you want to work in a city, state federal government?” Anything about nonprofits. You want to implement policies and everything of that major. And everybody spoke to me and what I

want to do in my career. So it was all administrations before I came to the U.S. [United States] and never wavered while I was there. And I said before that program as well.

DT [00:09:34] OK, yeah, that was going to be my next question, if you had stuck with it until graduation?

MB [00:09:39] Yes, yes.

DT [00:09:42] So earlier you were talking about how you remember what—you'd never heard about the Honors College and you got the email from Tricia. So what did that reinforce—“Oh yeah, it's definitely UCA now.” Or because for some people, it was like, “Oh, the Honors College,” but it sounds kind of for you. It was UCA first or?

MB [00:10:04] It was I had a feeling it was UCA first. I was going to go to UCA regardless if I had the honors of college or not. Like I said, it was not too far away from home and I had no idea what want to experience the city or colleges. So, but yeah, when I saw that, I received an email on January 13th, 2016, and the deadline for the honors application at that time was January 31st, 2016. So I had any idea about what college was when I saw the email. They said it was just an application. I read up on it online and I looked at the application process and I— There was, I don't know if there was any way I was going to get that done in eighteen days technically.

I still have the note in my phone with my Schedler Honors College username and log in. The title of the note says “from mom and dad”, and that was because I wanted to take on at the time that Honors College would provide the full scholarships. And I believe, once I got it,

they will make it easier to help you help on the financial side of things. And if they want to, perform energy and finances towards Michael's education, they don't have to worry about me.

And so I applied. I mean, I felt free email about what it was. I didn't know what they were doing, but I went online. It's all a little bit of everything. I had no idea what the curriculum was like. I saw full scholarship and I was like, "Yeah sign me up." So but the response from the thirteenth to the end of the month, I was just all hands on. See, my application was what could I do next? Finishing up everything because a lot of people I know for even now for [unclear] honors college they on it day one. I was almost near their deadline, so I was going to make sure I had all my ends together and make sure I had a recommendation letters, all my essays.

Transport was the things I was pressing on the most. I was at my school registrar's office every day, making sure they got it. They would just send it to UCA they wouldn't send it to the honors college P.O. box or the mailbox. So I was like, "No, you have to do this exact location, this exact mailbox." I would think and write up an email that day, I would check my email that day. It was that email right there. When I knew that—when I saw that I was thinking myself, I have to try this out and see if I can get it. I was going to UCA anyway but like I said. If I have the right thing, it would put a big impact on the family and helping out with everything. So I was definitely striving to make sure I had that done.

DT [00:13:07] Right, so what was it like when you got did you come to I-Squared day? Is that what did you have that? So what was it like when you got the invitation to come in for an interview then?

MB [00:13:16] Then I was excited. I was at school. I was at lunch, but I snuck off to the computer lab cause I was checking the status of it every day. To see if my application moved forward. When I found out, I was excited. I couldn't wait to go home and tell my parents. I was like, "Yeah, we gotta- I gotta make sure I can go to this day. I'm going, I'm going, and I need to make sure y'all are all- Take me up there." Yeah, I was very excited for the I-Squared. It was an experience, I will tell you that. Even though it only last about a regular workday. You get there around eight, probably done around three or four.

When I got there, I mean, I knew who I was. I had confidence in who I was, and I really walked in on that. Of course, I read the reasons [Unclear] for the application, everyone to focus on that for the I-Squared. I thought if I just had a lot of confidence, knowing my abilities, knew who I was, and stepped in the room I was the smartest person or the best person for it, for the college, they would take me. That's what I did. I had my suit on, [Unclear] bow tie. I should have pictures of that. My mom taking pictures of me.

I just want to make sure I wasn't the face they will forget. Because at that time they had two I-Squared Day's, but they also had one for makeup. That's a range about of, I don't know, one hundred and eighty people, you got to make yourself stand out to be part of it. I think it was 60 or probably more than it was able to join. I think there were way more than 60, probably 90. No, 75, 75 was the number.

I had to make sure I was at least one of those 75 that made it in that college because the full ride was, that was everything to me at the time. So I made sure to focus. I made sure that- Make a lasting impression on everyone I met. Make sure to shake everyone's hand, ask

questions. My parents was asking a lot of questions too, believe me., I was just– I made sure to made myself a face and a name that they wouldn't forget, so I'm glad I did that.

DT [00:15:42] Do you remember who you interviewed with and what that experience was like?

MB [00:15:48] Yes, I was I was with Conrad Shumaker. [Unclear] and we'll get on that later. Yeah, I was in there. I think for the most part our, if I remember correctly, some of my cohorts that were there [unclear] of my cohort classmates. He had this one thing–I keep forgetting this–He talked about a motorcycle and motorcyclists wearing seatbelts and stuff like that, I don't know, it was just– I should remember that part.

I just made sure that I always had the last word. [Laughs] I'm sure I always have permission to get the last word. I want them to know that I'll work to engage when it's no– I mean, if anything say something. It was probably a lot of things. I didn't know what was going on at the time and didn't know what they were talking about. I just wanted to make sure I had my input on something that was a shot to speak. Always offering something new to the table, making sure my voice was heard. That was really important to me.

DT [00:16:59] Yes, yes, of course, especially with such a small group. I mean, how many people do you remember? Five or six?

MB [00:17:08] I'm thinking six.

DT [00:17:10] Six?

MB [00:17:11] I'm thinking that was six. I'm think two, well, maybe I think it was eight. I'm think it was three of three on my side. Three on the other side, probably had two at the end. It's what I'm thinking about this, it must've been around eight people--[Crosstalk]

DT [00:17:39] [Crosstalk] You're good--Did Donna give the lecture for that day?

MB [00:17:43] She did.

DT [00:17:45] What did you think of that? What were your first impressions?

MB [00:17:47] I was shocked. I mean, I go through this-- I went to that lecture all the time, which I [Unclear] The fact that she was able to relate the reading to the Old Navy analogy, about changing clothes to see if they fit. That was something that really stuck with me because all the technical jargon and everything like that coming from Crossett High School, I didn't get a lot of that.

I was in a lot of-- [Unclear] I was in AP [Advanced Placement] courses, but even those were very limited. You go to school [Unclear] they have a whole schedule of AP courses. We only have maybe about five or six, maybe seven in all the opportunities a lot of these schools were able get to advance in education further. I kind of felt I was on the back end of that because I didn't get the opportunity for that. I want to make sure that I was able to relate that information to this all went down and came up with the-- Talked about the read and actually managed to. When Donna came and talked about the reading and actually made it into an analogy that everyone could understand I was like, "Well, maybe this is a place for me.

Maybe I can do something right, right here because if I can just take the reins, I can do it to just try to make it to a match that works for me.” You will do exactly well. Maybe you can help me understand material better.

I was very glad that she did that. I still hear that analogy multiple times after that day. I even made it easier for the writing assignment. Just making sure if I had any doubts about what the information was up to that point, she made it very clear to me how the program was going to be and what expectations they have of us. Try on new clothes and see if something fits. At that time, I was ready to go to college and see who I really was and see if whatever I stuck with it. It felt like that the honors college were really encouraging of that transformation. That's definitely something I want to be a part of for the next four years.

DT [00:20:04] What was it like when you found out that you had gotten in?

MB [00:20:09] Oh [Laughs] Ooo-wee. For some reason I do not remember that day. I know. Not the date, but I know for a fact I was jumping for joy. It came pretty quick. My I-Squared Day was, I think it was at the end of February. I think it was twenty six or the twenty eight, and the actual date came all the fourth.

The actual initial [Unclear] I think the whole thing was the last or the 4th of March. They just passed what the six year anniversary of that place would post things, [Unclear] would never let you forget. I did a paper poster and I was thinking I was just so happy. I read down at the bottom— There was a middle part, where I got to the bold print. All of this UCA top scholarship package, which is the full ride combined with the Arkansas Challenge Scholarship, and man I almost had tears coming out of my eyes.

It felt good because I didn't have a job. I was playing football, so I didn't really have the option of having a part time job. But knowing the fact that my parents were working day and night to make sure we would have food on the table, clothes, we will never know. I never felt we were nowhere near broke, and there was never a night that I never knew where my meal was coming from or anything like that. The fact that I was able to relieve, no, pay them back and not having to pay for my college at all was the best feeling in the world.

I still thank the honors college for that to this day because there's no telling, especially what went on during those years if I didn't have that scholarship and where we would be. So I was very excited that day. I'm still excited whenever I see it. I tell people all the time. When I read that I still have that letter in my phone as a picture. And when I read it, it reads like the first time I read it. I will get excited all over again. I'm very thankful for it, and it's just a great thing to have. [Unclear] to keep it and just look in and see how far you come.

What you can do, even— It just really resonated with me, just as a kid from Crossett, Arkansas who I admire in my, I guess I don't know if they can correct me on this, but in my research probably the first person in Crossett to actually attend the UCA Honors College. It was just one of those moments where that I could finally say that it was not too far for me to reach out in a limb, and I was good enough. I was ready and offer someone who saw value with me, even as a kid from the Delta with a not a lot of educational opportunities, but someone saw fit and saw value in me that they would take part of me in their program, which offered a full ride.

That day was. It was amazing. I don't remember— I remember the March 4th, so I that day I got that letter. I actually do remember that day, March 4, 2016. Man it was just— Ah man I just can't describe it as much as I can anymore. It was just very, very affirming not only to my parents pockets, but affirming to me as an individual about how far I can go in this world even as a kid from a medium town.

DT [00:23:41] You got in, and I feel that was definitely the first big step getting in. But once you were in, I mean, what did you think of honors? You talked about how Donna's lecture was different compared to other classes in high school. It was a different level of thinking, more critical thinking. So Core I, what were your first impressions from that class?

MB [00:24:10] [Laughs] Let's revert a little bit back to the day zero lecture. We're not [Laughs] cause that was the big day too when I got to UCA I was getting acclimated making sure I got my face where I know I can because I wanted to get involved. That was the main thing. When the day zero lecture came, and we actually had to get in school mode I was hearing so many different. So, so much technical jargon. So many big words.

I honestly almost talked myself out of even staying. [Laughs] Oh, I was like, "These are my cohort." If you go back to the I don't know if you have it available, but the news article they have for the cohort it was so many valedictorians, and the average GPA [Grade Point Average] for that cohort was very high. A lot of them had the distinguished scholarship. I was a little intimidated. I was like, "Can I make it this far with these individuals?" I was like, I was already there, though, and I don't know what it was. I know a lot of people got the imposter syndrome that was that was it right there. Even then I just like it was even more it was a more different variant of it that, that no one else could feel. Cause man I just never—

[Unclear] When [Unclear] lecture came, when they did all that, I did not have a grasp of anything as of where the self is located. So many people had so many intelligent cohesive answers. And I'm thinking to myself, "I don't know where the self is located." I was already thinking like, "Oh yeah, this is going to be stuff that you have to work up. You have to— It's a final you got to fight for your place to stay and to not only yourself, but everyone that you decided to be here."

When I got to Core I, Conrad Shoemaker was my professor. I always have a lot of respect for that class. It changed my life. I tell people that all the time. That Core I class changed my life because coming from a school where it was assignment after assignment, a lot of regurgitating information on it is you get the I got over it. It wasn't a lot of critical thinking going involved unless you were an english class or history class. Math really doesn't require that much, so I will leave that alone. Wasn't lot of critical thinking it was more of regurgitating information and hope you remember [Unclear] information. Hope you remember it by the test and be able to put it all on paper and a couple more choice of response or essay questions.

When I got to Core I, reading a journal, giving your thoughts on the journal, answer a couple of questions even to make sure you understand but giving your thoughts and understanding how relates to your life. I never had that. [Unclear] into the class. Now you focus on a journal you did, I mean you can incorporate that in there with having a discussion on not only the oh no, not on the reading, how the reading can affect everyday life? How it can be incorporated in everyday life?

That was a real beautiful thing to me because I mean, I never thought history can be like that. I never thought I could be affirmed in that way and be able to actually be able to share an experience every day or every Monday, Wednesday, Friday that can really affect the conversation and even the knowledge in this space. Just the fact that they were really, really that curriculum really reaches out to make sure everyone can get involved and have their input and embrace different ideas. I knew from that first lecture or that first session, after the syllabus day. After that first journal and we discussed that in class, I was like, “Yeah, this is something I don't– I guess I was [Unclear] about four years but didn't know it. It was a hidden gem in my life that I needed.”

That Core I course I was excited to go to it every day. I never missed a class, even though– Even the big lectures. I never missed a Core I class. I was excited to be there. The first one, the last one out. It was just something every time we had a discussion it was always something I could take with me. I never knew how [Unclear]. I always thought I walked into Rome not knowing anything and walked out of it knowing everything I possibly wanted. So I'm always with a class. I tell people all the time even about who asked me about what my class was, that Core I class. They introduced me to the honors curriculum and showed me what I can bring to the table and inspire me. When I got there and let me affirmed when I left it.

DT [00:29:17] I'm curious, how did your perceptions of the honors college before actually experiencing and being introduced to the style and the curriculum? How did that change? What did you think you were coming into before you knew?

MB [00:29:32] Well, I'll say this. Oh, I was going go in there with a whole bunch of for lack of a better word of— [Laughs] nerds. I was a nerd too so I'm not gonna just put myself out there, if I was going to go in there with a lot of people that were as tall as me. I mean, where—, I wasn't as smart of them and everyone around me because of the language they used everything like that. I thought it was going to be a competition with one another. It's not going to be a thing where they kick you out or something. I just knew before I got into it that if I were to get in, it was very, very much so be apparent that I was the weakest link. I thought I would be treated a little bit differently, especially in this respect.

In my core, there were only two black males. Me and Tracy Blakley. Even that had a little effect about how I felt in that space when I got there and even just— I just thought I was going to be exposed. I'm a fraud, imposter syndrome— You are an imposter. Get out all that kind of thing. When I got there, it was just a beautiful experience. Like I said at the time, going to college is to be transformative for everybody. A lot of people don't know where they are till they experience that, those years. When I got there and they affirmed me and lifted me up and was able to help was willing to help mold me in doing care about who I was and where I came from, it was willing to treat me the same as everyone else. Wanted to take the time with me to even give me the material to learn. All that stuff we learned in honors I don't think I ever would be able to touch that if I never had that experience. All the readings we had, I don't think I ever would have known about any of those things or had access to any of those things if it wasn't for them.

For them to share that knowledge, and share the world with me. It really spoke volumes to me. Those really helped me believe and trust in the process a little bit more so I gave in to everything they wanted to do, whatever they asked for. I be there, I put my all into it. I didn't

want to cut corners, that was just out of thanks for them even choosing me. I just wanted to make sure I gave my all and everything. I support them and everything they do and just made sure I was there and always a helping hand if they wanted to spread the word that you can do anything within college— To help get the word out and make the honors college more visible. Anything like that, they asked me to I would do it— I was just it's I still am eternally grateful for them, what they've done for me.

DT [00:32:32] You were talking about— You thought it was going to be kind of this competitiveness in the classroom, but that's not really what honors is about. It's more a collaborative conversation amongst everybody. So what would you what was your experience with your cohort and the students in your classroom?

MB [00:32:55] Yeah. I will say right now. I could probably name you almost all of my cohort by name. We are— I want to say we are still that close. I was able to have at least a conversation with at least one of them. Well at least one conversation with all of them by the time we started and the time we left. Of course there are some that are in no doubt really close to me to this day.

But like I said earlier, the one thing that really stood out about that cohort was that it was it was only two black males. It was just me and Tracy Blakley, so we kind of bonded off that there. The fact that I was able to see people from different backgrounds, [Unclear] other people that was from the Little Rock area, went to Little Rock Christian. Two of those were my roommates the first year, Just the fact that we had a whole bunch of different backgrounds going on.

I think at that time, it was at that point it was the most diverse class honors had. It was the most diverse. It was an honor of being a part of that. I didn't feel alone because I mean it was a lot of people color that I can relate to. Kind of related to mine. Yeah, I never had any ill will towards anyone in my cohort. Like I said, I was able to at least establish a connection with all of them because I respected all of them and where they came from and what they do because— I say in the beginning, I was a little jealous of the experience they had as high schoolers and growing up in areas where school districts were more influence and had more opportunities. I don't blame them for that at all. I was excited for them to share their high school experiences. Share what they have learned throughout this life and everything like that, and I was impressed to summon up the one where I was impressed with them.

I was always interested to see what kind of background they had because for me, Crossett wasn't a big place at all. There's no mall there. It's not a lot of restaurants. We have a bowling alley and a lot of other things, but to actually have entertainment, you have to go out to other cities to enjoy it. That's only if— It's not something you do every day. We don't even have a movie theater. You have to go forty five— Thirty to forty five minutes to Monticello before a movie theater or go— forty five minutes to an hour to Monroe, Louisiana to go to the mall and actually shop for clothes and then go to movie theater there.

The fact that these individuals came and had their own experiences and was able to share a different view of life than what I had, I was always curious to see what they had going on and how they come to be. I've always [Unclear] because to be honest I thought they were always more interesting than mine. I thought maybe if they were able to share with me about who they were and how they help me identify who I was, what I wanted to do.

DT [00:36:27] Yeah, it sounds you really embraced the values and honors the diversity aspect and being there to get to know other people's stories and perceptions, perspectives of the world and stuff, that's great. In the pre-interview you mentioned being impacted by a few honors classes, do you want to talk about any of those?

MB [00:36:55] Yeah so I already went on Core I. I really enjoyed all of them. There are none of them I did not like at all. There are— I enjoyed all of them. Core II I had Doug Corbitt. Like I said, the pre-interview when I first heard his voice, at our fall retreat, I thought it was the voice of god. I was like, “Yeah, that's what—” [Unclear] yeah. I was amazed. I couldn't believe it. I was in the middle of eating I was like “What is that magnificent sound?” I was like, “Who is that?” Next thing I know I hear him. Yeah, that was good.

But of course, search for a community of really established having more of a communal aspect and how that plays into a part of self. I think for that class is definitely a lot more [Unclear] I can relate to it, considering that community brings everyone together. And so that was what I was want to do to find out who I was. I want to make sure I have a holistic view of everything. I want to make sure if I like what I like, if I didn't what was not fun to look for in that class. In that class right there, you had a lot more reading that I can relate to and a lot more enjoyable. I really respect that class a lot on [Unclear].

The Great Divide with Dr. Leah Horton. That was good. It really touched on, inequalities and what we can do to not understand them. We addressed in changing them if possible. When it comes to class discussions that you talked about different socioeconomic status. Of course, you have a lot of folks that are going to want to know that's something they can relate to in their everyday lives. What I didn't go on today course thinking about I have a page and I

said– Belittle someone because they don't have the same point of view with me and stuff like that. It was more of a way of how we can work together to not only address those issues, but actually even know about them. There are a lot of things that I didn't even know that were appearing for many communities. We all work while standing up together and sought ways to how to cease this issue together and see what we can do moving forward as individuals about even how we change our language, one's words and what's surrounding issues and everything like that. Just making sure we're on the right– We always want to make sure we solution oriented. Not always problem oriented because if you're always looking for a problem, it'll never get solved. If you're solution oriented, you always have the opportunity to make the change. I really enjoy that class.

Core IV, African Voices, with Doug Corbitt again. I really– That was the class when I came over, I was like, “Yeah, I want to get into that.” Mainly, it was fifty percent Doug and fifty percent the course. I read the course description and I always wanted– I thought that class is actually a way to get in touch with my heritage. I've never been to Africa before. Never even studied or had the chance to study Africa with a school project when I was in grade school, but I thought that was the other way to help me understand the way of life for individuals in our school. Not only for the present day, but even in the past with issues of colonialism and apartheid and those of that nature cause I never had the opportunity to not experience or study that at all. I saw that class as a way to help me [Unclear] myself closer to home technically. Before that class I actually bought a pendant of Africa. Let me grab it.

DT [00:41:00] Fun fact, I was actually talking to Doug before this about that class, asking him some questions and he mentioned this to me. He asked me if you were wearing it during our pre-interview.

MB [00:41:13] I wore— I got in the fall of 2019 cause I had class in 2018. No, fall 2018 I had a class for 2018, I believe. Yeah, well, I got that after I took his course. It was that fall. When I got it, I wore every day. I wore it every day to everything. Of course I took it off when it was night time and every time I go to bed. I wore this every day in general and everyone used to recognize the difference between me and my brother because I used to wear this all the time. They would say, you the one with the Africa Chain, that's Mylon. I wore it every day.

The pendant didn't actually break, but the chain broke. My nephew broke it in early February 2020, so I had to get a different one. I always to keep this pendant in case I want to get a different chain and put it on there because it symbolizes a time where I was able to— At least when I wear it, it makes me remember that class and how that class made me feel like. It was so much history that I never knew about myself and even to this day, it inspired me to maybe try to figure out my ancestry, family tree and see if I can make make any pieces there. It was just a very powerful class, so I feel it was one of really shaped to me as an individual. As you can see, it really that impact on me. I'm very thankful for that.

Oxford, yeah, let's not get into that. [Multiple laughs] Mainly the classes, they help you get a first look at what planning is for your capstone project. It wasn't really too much of any journals at all. If anything they happen in the beginning, and you won't have to worry about them as much. They really focus on weekly progress about having a reader, a second reader, having a topic, making sure you have the knowledge, and then getting the opportunity to ask for help if you need to understand the topic. We only had that class for one time a week. It usually goes by the regular system, but we only provide weekly updates about how far you going off for your project— [Crosstalk]

DT [00:43:45] [Crosstalk] So– Did you know what your capstone? Sorry.

MB [00:43:49] Oh, let me see. I actually admit the one of finish with was actually a second choice. My first choice was actually to– I wanted to do a study on how music affects memory and emotions, but Whit asked me, she’s like, “Do you have the knowledge about the information or are you going to seek out the information?” Considering my course load, it was no way for me to double up on taking music classes, or taking music theory and stuff like that and try to get that information so I talked myself out of that one real quick. It was a system I want to do, maybe later in my life, but it was my first choice was to study how music affects memory and emotions.

Then the second choice was African-American religion. What is the big thing about that on the college campus? [Unclear] In the spring before that fall, I took African American Religions thought course by Dr. Julia Winden-Fey. That class spoke to me because growing up I was a church boy. I was going to church every Sunday, every Wednesday, even on Saturday [Unclear] meetings. I want to know the study, where the thought came from, and how to [Unclear] move forward throughout the African American history and study that. That was really something I was focused on, even after I got out of that class. I definitely want to put their knowledge to good use. That's how I came up with my subject and final thesis project. [Laughs] With the thesis idea.

DT [00:45:37] Where did the– You said that was your second choice, but where did the inspiration for that come from? Was it just that class or were there other?

MB [00:45:50] Oh, well– I always well– When I was growing up, like I said, I went to church Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday. Every time I was there. All the time, I rarely missed. My parents would never let me miss. During the opportunity, I was able to go to– Able to have the opportunity to go to a lot of church conventions and conferences. I always know that the older I got, there were a lot less people my age there. I’m wondering “Why? What drove you all away?” Years I was asking that question to myself and I finally have the opportunity to do something where I could probably maybe get a even a small answer of that question for this project. I definitely want to try and do that and see if I can get a good answer. Even if it is just the UCA students. Cause a couple UCA student I did go to church with and met a couple times, but I always want to understand why people my age is just left and I never see them again. Cause friendships we had established years prior, I never thought it would be the last, I'll be able to speak. I always want to know what drove people away, what kept them there.

A lot of studies aren't really showing that. Hopefully I thought that my project would basically be something that– To give an [Unclear] for someone who wants to know more about this subject, you get to start and see where it can go forward from there. We'll see what people [Unclear] for– Leave it to the church or whatever their religious denomination was.

DT [00:47:32] You did have a survey, right, that you gave out kind of to gather some information for that?

MB [00:47:40] Yes I did.

DT [00:47:42] What was that like? I guess some initial gatherings to answer this question that you had?

MB [00:47:50] Oh, well, the survey in itself was not difficult at all. It only took me maybe four hours to complete initially, but my reader, who is my mentor, who is of out [Unclear] with the professor of the African-American Thought religious class which I mentioned previously she was wanting to make sure we would be able to get down to the nitty gritty stuff. Cause I was just asking basic stuff like demographics. “What religious denomination were you? How long did you attend? How many times did you go a week?”

She wanted me to get down to the nitty gritty about asking open ended question about “What are the effects that drove you away? What are some things that you wish you could’ve changed about your experience? [Unclear] Would you be willing to sit down and do an interview with and talk about everything?” Those are things I never thought of. I thought it was gonna be a quick and easy interview. I’ll just write some notes down, get the grasp together, put in the paper and we’ll be all good. for the answer right then.

And there I was, cutting corners for the first time. Like I said previously, I didn’t want to cut corners. Such a big project, especially year three, and I got the full scholarship and we ain’t paying no money yet. I’m never gonna— I gotta put all my all into this. The survey in itself wasn’t hard, initial survey wasn’t hard. I’ll go in and say this. Actually the [Unclear] of the Office of Student Success, so she had a master list of all the African-American students on campus and our e-mails. I was able to copy that whole list, put it all in an email, and send it out to everybody. It just took time. Just wait to be done.

When initially those came back, I think I was not surprised and a lot of loud questions and answers or a lot answers from, oh, of course, for the most part, we look at the [Unclear] is anonymous where you can go out to individual [Unclear] and I want to do too much of it at all. As a whole, it wasn't really shocking at all to see those answers. It really just kind of almost affirmed what I believed about what was going on and people's experiences were.

I was able to sit down and interview five individuals that did my survey. I try to get them all from at least different backgrounds. Freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, one who was in the church, one who actually [Unclear] was an atheist. I was making sure I had representation in that area. I don't want all to have the same answers and the same experience. I wanted to make sure I had a little diversity in that.

But yeah, it would— I think that was mainly the bulk of it, everything. So I mean, all the information was able to help me prepare my thesis and get all the information for that. It was pretty fun doing that. Like I said, the survey wasn't too much. All you had to do was just prepare and then administer. Then just doing the interviews. Like I said, even for my honors cohort [Unclear] experiences. I wanted to get everyone's experience. I was very [Unclear] to come and share with their time, explaining to me a little bit about how their journey was and their religious affiliation. What faith is kept in there. What I drove them away, what they enjoyed about it. So yeah, I really enjoyed the whole process as a whole.

DT [00:51:45] OK, and then just because I thought it related to your capstone project, did religion remain an important aspect of your life all throughout college?

MB [00:51:56] Yeah, yeah. Oh, my fault. It still is, definitely. I still go to church every Sunday and do it virtually with covid and everything. [Unclear] Well, religion was always a big thing. I always pray before I make a big decision. I pray before I did the honors college application. Just make sure to [Laugh] make [Unclear] would I believe that I'd be [Unclear] to provide for me and allow me to live to see another day. Even to this day I'm still very adamant in my faith. Trying to make sure I don't forget about all of that in the midst of living on my own. And everything that's going on just making sure that I remember who I am and remember who got me. So I'm very adamant and very still involved in my faith.

DT [00:52:58] I love that. With Capstone, did you take that spring of 2020 before graduation?

MB [00:53:06] Yes, yes.

DT [00:53:07] OK, so what was it like to finish off at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic? I mean, you came all this way and then it's just like, "Hey, school's done— [Crosstalk]

MB [00:53:24] [Crosstalk] [Laughs] So— Man I remember the day I was at a Pi Sigma Alpha [Unclear] honors society and hosted an event for women in leadership. Since it was— I think it was International Women's Day. During that event, we got the email saying that "All schools is shutting down. Y'all go home for spring break, but don't come back. We gon get y'all together and make sure y'all get your stuff, but don't come back right now." I was like, "Dang, I thought I was going to be out for a good two weeks, but it turned out to be the whole semester."

Well, yeah, everything changed. My courses, we were doing them all online. I did to make sure— The computer I have right now, the same one I had it did not have a working camera, so I can't turn the camera on even if I wanted to. If there was questions that I have to have a [Unclear] capstone, I'll have to borrow my brother's or someone else's and get on there. It has been— Even now I'm thinking about it just took a complete stop on everything. And for a lot of folks, even a lot of people, not only in cohort, but who graduated as the class of 2020, they did not get the closure that they need not only from the organizations, but having a sense completion because—

Of course we [Unclear] technically all of the courses were done in May, but we didn't have the actual graduation, so they delated that always everybody had a team. It was an optional thing, people were already on with their lives moving to new states, new cities. Just on this list of names, they didn't have the time to come back and celebrate the last [Unclear] of their lives. Some people was just ready to get it over with and just “send me my diploma and degree in the mail.”

I think for my experience I just felt I did not get the closure I wanted. I mean, of course honors did a— We had a zoom for our cohort, but even then I was really excited to celebrate with them. Do the honors banquet. There's a lot of banquets [Unclear] that's the biggest thing? [Laughs] They obviously got away from me [Unclear] [Laughs]

It was just the fact that— When we did everything differently, it was new to everyone. I think no one, no one didn't want this to happen. The way that we had to just do everything, even honor stood by to offer resources for us. Kept the doors open. It really helped us out, even in a time where we didn't know what was going on. [Unclear] daily [Unclear] was changing

daily. [Unclear] Cause at first we didn't need the mask or did we have to get one? Man it was just— It's just a weird thing. Even [Unclear] Whit [Unclear] Capstone [Unclear] at the time, they had her actually having to develop kind of a cozy cast on guidelines for individuals that are doing that because you had to make sure they have to do the [Unclear] and everything like that, even in the virtual space. Cause we were meeting up in person, so the COVID thing happened. Everyone had to adjust. I really commend the honors college sticking beside us, and I'll leave it up [Unclear] are usually castle presentations on information he did them virtually also.

I appreciate that though I'm not going to lie. That very neat cause I actually have the video of my presentation on my laptop and all the chat from it. That's something you can definitely keep somebody out there with a camcorder or something. I definitely was able— I'm glad that we did it that way with the information.

But man it just— Like I said, [Unclear] they didn't get closure as far as campus goes. And I was one of them, for sure. But I always look back and I did everything I wanted to. I got the floor, the scholarship, I was very involved on campus, got the awards and everything. That didn't really mean much. I just want to be involved because it's just something to do. And just maybe I could just find out what I like to do, and it was involvement. I always tell people all of time. I never [Unclear] the experience. I was able to do what I wanted and have fun doing it. Even got the degree to end it all out. So I'm very thankful for the situation. Even if we couldn't go get our haircuts like I could've. Go to the cafeteria and get a sit down and have a nice meal. Just go and get to go plates and take it out.

I'm just even for that experience I'm just thankful for— Mainly the aspect of adaptability and being able to turn the corner quick, making sure we have Plan B and everything like that. I don't regret it. Like I said, I did everything I wanted to, and it is a very good thing or a bad thing that it happened, but I guess it was very good for my [Unclear] I was able to take in the situation, make adjustments if needed, stay grounded, and just focus on what I have to do to finish out everything I need to. Get a job, that was the main thing. Get a job [Laughs] after graduation and just stick to what I knew, what was right and what was the future had there for me. It was very much with me. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

DT [00:59:23] And then you just mentioned one of the next steps was getting a job. And that was, right again, pandemic. So what was that like? Was it? I mean fresh out of college and there's a pandemic— [Crosstalk]

MB [00:59:38] [Crosstalk] It was terrible— I'll tell you what. I had started applying close to or before Spring Break. I wanted to get a job if they don't make those jobs would definitely hire me at the time to look at those [Unclear] All you needed was a master's degree. So I would apply for a lot of the administrative [Unclear] jobs because those are the entry level jobs for many of the government agencies. Even when I was applying to those, they weren't getting back to me because the market was on the whole. I was like, “Well, how am I supposed to live?” Cause I had signed a lease on the apartment. I had money saved up cause I had refunds, but I wasn't getting any income so that was coming out of my checking account. If I was doing half of everything, half of rent, half of utilities, half of these groceries? I had to find a job, and I was just focused [Unclear] cause all the benefits of that. I'll more likely get a job there.

I didn't actually start work until September of 2020. I got a job at the Disability Determination for Social Security here in Arkansas. This is my first full time job and understanding leave, or taking leave. Doing time sheets. I mean, I had a couple— I had a peer coach job when I was in honors. I was only maybe eight hours a week, four hours a week I think. It wasn't much I was doing because, I mean, not a lot of individual comes by the office. I was just doing office hours and no one would show up. Actually going to a job and I got to do something every day and have an assignment and for doing things and having a— Technically having a nine to five, that was pretty much different than what I was used to. I was glad to get paid [Unclear] paid. I was— I wouldn't say I was broke, but if I kept going up, I probably wasn't gonna make it by the end of the year.

DT [01:01:47] I didn't know you were a peer coach for the Honors College. So it was hard to get people to come to office hours. Is there any advice that you would give to current peer coaches or anybody that's thinking about applying to become future peer coach?

MB [01:02:04] I would say definitely know the areas that you were having troubles with, and see what you can do before you, before you get a peer coach know what areas you have struggles with with. Major in the college life. and see what solutions that you made cause I can guarantee you someone coming in and they're going to ask probably ask those same questions. They're gonna ask for your advice about life and how you navigate that.

Consider I was a first generation student me and other first generation students, there were a lot of questions about— Doing the FAFSA [Free Application for Student Aid] and stuff like that, making sure we had scholarships in order and even [Unclear] that we're going, with a lot of stuff on UCA campus, a lot of people don't know about and don't take advantage of. I

would definitely make sure to know the kind of thing that will give you trouble and what solutions you made to combat those, as well as knowing the resource that you can point people to.

I mean, I don't want the peer coach to be— I mean, it would be good if you were all in at all, if you were able to get the problem solved through peer coaching. We do know it takes more of an individual accountability as well to go out and make sure they have the available resources and the money to go out and make things better for themselves. It's nice to actually have some resources for them to point them in the right direction. So I would definitely try to encourage that you have that information. And share that with future people, individuals who may need that coaching and counseling.

DT [01:03:52] And then outside of the peer coach, did you have any other leadership experiences in honors?

MB [01:03:58] I was an honors ambassador for three years, years. Yeah, that was that was interesting. I went to college fairs, I-Squared Day. That's why I was saying that I heard Donna's "Old Navy" lecture all the time cause I was actually working in the room where she did the lecture. That was a good experience, too. Like I said, I was very grateful for the honors college selected me to be part of that cohort, give me the full ride that I was willing to do anything to bring the mission out worldwide, whatever you want me to do. If you wanted me to go up and speak at an event, I was gonna go do it. I just want to give opportunity to show people that looked like me that come from backgrounds like me that you can make it here too, and you can help be able to, succeed here and be a face in the college and be able to— In a different way of life from this curriculum. So I will always have the support of them

and what they want to do and whatever they ask. I did it. Peer coaching, I was an honors ambassador, I was a PA, anything they wanted me to do I was doing. I was just so embedded to them about how they selected me and brought me in and showed me everything that I want this for that everyone else as much as I could.

DT [01:05:23] Did you happen to take or participate in the honors panel for the I-Squared Day in 2020?

MB [01:05:33] Oh, I was not on the panel because I was actually working the event. I know some people that do work the event. They they actually ask is to work on the panel as the kind of work thing, but I was not on the panel. I was just more [Unclear] and everybody through the traffic going through different.

[Unclear] But there are many other occasions where I was on panels and spoke about college and what it brought to me, especially for— I was also a UCA ambassador, like a student ambassador. When they had special days, bring students in and do special tours and have those opportunities, I was able to— When they ask questions about the honors college and whenever we got to Farris Hall, I told everything. I told them all the good things I enjoyed and all the benefits from me, and I made sure that— Make sure that the program was spoken in a good light and make you want to apply. I don't care how late it was, it could've been the day before. If you want to join, you get yourself together today, I don't know how are you going to do it but if you want to get on there, I definitely recommend them. I would tell everybody all the panels I was on, all the tours I did. I always spoke highly of the honors college and always want to make sure that other people have the opportunity to experience what I got to experience.

DT [01:06:52] I love that you took the opportunities even outside of honors. If you had the chance to talk to people, you were doing that. That's great. OK, so kind of backtracking to what you're currently doing. So is that job that you have now? Is that in Conway? And is that one of the reasons that you decided to stay or?

MB [01:07:17] I was gonna stay in Conway because I like Conway. The job is not in Conway it is actually in Little Rock. It is about 10 minutes walking distance from the Capitol, the State Capitol building. It's actually in Little Rock. I like Conway. I [Unclear] live the rest of my life here because compared to Crossett there are so many more things you can do here. When you go down Oak Street, there are more restaurants on Oak Street than there is in the entirety of Crossett. So many options you can choose from Oak Street alone.

I enjoy the community here. I'm real— I want to say real avid on my [Unclear] school board meetings and stuff like that. Whenever— They've just had a recent [Unclear] they had a special election, and I'm making sure to be a part of all this local elections, state elections, and all that kind of thing. Cause I do [Unclear] to help Conway grow. I feel I'm a resident here. I've been here since 2016. I haven't left, so I definitely feel a beacon this year. Like I say this, this is the place where I feel I could spent the rest of my life at.

Of course, with the job and that in Little Rock [Unclear] the gas prices. Oh lord. [Laughs] I just I would consider three dollars and I'd say, "Oh oh boy," oh yeah, I have to fill up every week. The job itself, I really enjoy. I'm not going to lie, though. I am looking for quite a career change. Hopefully I can get that opportunity soon. When I got the job, I didn't even know that job was [Unclear] I just knew they were hiring— [Crosstalk]

DT [01:09:00] [Crosstalk] Gotcha– Do you want to talk a little bit about what they do?

MB [01:09:03] Yeah, yeah, yeah. So. The Disability Determination Social Security handles those Social Security disability claims. Basically, if a person stops working, they have the ability to apply for Social Security disability benefits because they are paid into the system through their checks. They have Social Security withdrawal, so they can do that. My job specifically is that when people are applying and they have applied that I will go and get the medical records to see if they meet a disability listed. Those listings are developed and organized by a body system, so you can meet a respiratory listing or cardiovascular listing even listed for cancer of the nervous system. Most musculoskeletal injuries, osteoarthritis, back pain, that kind of thing. It just goes throughout all body systems. My job is to basically go out of the medical records. Summarize what is in those records. Send that somewhere to be rated by one of our medical consultants, which is one of our doctors, and they proceed on what a decision with that rating.

That's mainly it. I read medical records from most of the day. It ranges from a time period. Let's say, for example, if you are [Unclear] a date of September 1, 2021, that you are– Your conditions made you unable to work as a request a year prior to that date to the present date to make sure if you meet a disability list or if you are even able to return back to your past or other work. It's very hands on job. It's very much so independent. I have a lot of pleasure there, but your casework is mainly focused on how much you put into it. If you get behind, you get behind. I mean, I wanna say it's all on you and nobody will help you out, but it's really your work to do. Last thing you want to do with do nothing because there's always something to do. I get six cases every week.

Originally, I was working Arkansas cases as part of my training. I currently still am in training, the job takes two years in itself to technically be sufficient at it. I'm only a year and a half in. I originally started off doing Arkansas cases, but I am a part of the extended service team, so we do cases out of state. At the first, I think– Well, I first received cases in November after– When we got around March or April or May, we started receiving Louisiana cases. Then recently, as of last month we started receiving Oregon cases, so I'm working Oregon case as well. It's a very nice environment. I go in there in regular clothes, so like stuff I'm wearing right now [Moves camera to show outfit] when I go to work. I've never worn a suit or any business casual or anything like that. I go in there casual because you never see anyone in person never talk to anyone like if their claim is in person. It is very rarely, but they would never speak to you. Mainly all of my work is on the phone or over the computer. I can go in there whatever I want. It's a liberal dress code. It is the highest paying job I ever thought somebody was going to give me.

DT [01:12:42] It's interesting cause you talk about it being– You doing the work by yourself, even though you are in training it's very independent. I'm thinking, coming from honors and having this community where you're constantly working around people, what was it like to leave honors and then enter this– This real world. This new job, not have that anymore?

MB [01:13:10] Yeah, initially I would say I will be candid and honest. I struggle beginning because I was so used to someone telling me what to do, how to do it and when to do it, and all that kind of thing. You get an assignment and I tell you what we're asking for and how to get the information in college. When you get to this job– My official title is a Claims Adjudicator and the jury telling me the judge.

There's a lot of gray area when it comes to making decisions. You have to be the judge as to where you want the place to go. That was the the different part for me at the beginning of everything because I'm so used to following the procedure. Where to go next. There are some situation there where procedure does is not that clearly outlined, yand ou have to make the decision for yourself. That's what I struggle with. That's what took me so long to help me decide. I was like, "I don't know where to go next." It had nothing to tell me what what to do next. That was a very difficult part that I was struggling with in the beginning of the job.

To this day I'm able to understand more of it, understand this in the process and learn from mistakes. I knew I was getting a lot of error at the beginning, but I'll make a note. I'll make it a problem and I did the same error twice. And so even now, I'm still learning, still making mistakes. My supervisor and even the mentors that are there, they still help me out whenever I ask questions. It was just a real big jump from being told what to do all the time to actually having to get up go to work, do a time sheet, work all day, come home, pay bills cook for yourself, clean for yourself. I was already doing that. I wouldn't say it was my first time not knowing how to do it myself. It's just the fact that coming from a place where you were told what to do every day constantly. Actually having to make it past your own self is a very big jump, it's a job they are still on to this day. Like I said, I just moved into this apartment last month, so I'm actually living on my own this time. It's all this stuff about myself that I'm learning navigating everything. Yeah, it's a very different jump. Very different experience. I wanted to learn from this experience just as I did the last four years in the honors college. Just take it one day at a time and be able to ask them any questions I need to and learn as much as I can from other individuals where have been in similar situations.

DT [01:15:53] Sorry, I'm— I was making sure that the transcript was still recording because it looked like it had stopped. Okay. All right. Man I had a question right now, but it just slipped my mind. OK, so I guess, since you were talking about it being different and you're still learning especially being by yourself, living by yourself and like doing everything on your own now. I have a good question for you. You said that when you entered Core I, you didn't know— You didn't have an answer to “where is the self?” So do you have an answer today? Is that is that changing through these experiences?

MB [01:16:42] Oh, well, you just said part of my answer. When I did— We did Core I and did the final essays that's where the self is located. My answer was that the self was always changing. There was not a finite place that you could locate to. Cause like I said in my experience throughout the first semester I was changing everything. I was learning new things about myself that I never thought I would have the opportunity to learn. Even to this day there are things I'm going out to try something new, going out and doing things I talked about for years but never had the money or the time to do it. Things that— My life years ago you don't like anymore, things you might've liked days ago you don't like you more.

I think the self is just evolving thing that is shaped by experiences. Who you are as a person. I don't think it's just something that you can just be locating. It's just something that changes every day, especially about your experiences and how you navigate your day steps. I just believe in that. I still believe that on the day I wrote that response to it in the final— In the Core I final say. It's just very much so that you have to respect where you are in a space every day and hours from this place and take control of that whole space and learn from this space in that space. That's basically to help you develop yourself on a daily basis. I'm sorry for that I didn't give you an actual answer. I've always believed that the self is just something that is

everchanging and could not be located. It's based on your experiences and what [Unclear] about what you're willing to take in and what your work is out to the rest of the world.

DT [01:18:32] Okay, I love that. If somebody told you about it like, "Oh, I heard you were an alumnus from the Schedler Honors College, can you tell me a little bit about it?" What would your response be?

MB [01:18:48] "Go ahead and put in the application before we even start talking." [Multiple Laughs] I would just say— Tell them about my experience. I wouldn't go too far deep as much as I am in this interview unless they would like to and have the time. I always, like I say, I always tell people to say this day that the honors college gave me something I never thought I would get anywhere else. I never thought anything, or it gave me everything I thought I didn't even need or didn't even know that I needed it. I always tell people that have always been looking for a different kind of curriculum, a place where you can be affirmed and live in and work with and understood and even have a challenge for it definitely was challenging in a lot of places. The honors college is the place for you.

Hopefully, throughout all the [Unclear}] that you are able to experience the same experience that I had and are able to to understand what you're learning at the time.

It was kind of difficult for me to— Cause I used to have a lot of connections with some of the seniors now and the previous group that just graduated. I always used to tell them, "Hey, what is wrong with me? I want you to go out and do this for yourself." That's what I would tell people to do. I can tell you all about my experience but until you experience for your own, there's still the word out there you want to know about. I think is the avenue that you can take in a holistic view of everything and see what your values and yours morals and

beliefs line up and see where life can take you. Cause UCA go here go anywhere. I say that about the honors college. You go here you go anywhere with what the honors college is giving you as well.

DT [01:20:38] Okay. Throughout this whole interview, you talked about the great things that you participated in honors and the opportunities it gave you, capstone project, being a peer coach, ambassador, all those great things. Is there anything that, if you could, would you do differently?

MB [01:20:58] Oh, I think I would have done a study abroad trip. I don't know. I've never been outside the country before. I think considering the fact that honors had money set aside experiential learning and actually sponsor some trips outside the country. I wish I could took part in it that. Well, I don't know if my mind at the time was ready for that kind of challenge. I was still growing. I was still really a [Unclear] I was finally where I was. I felt like I didn't want to go out of the country and learn a whole new set of things going on and– [Unclear] what the equivalent is to the U.S. dollar and stuff like that.

Even though there were a lot of good trips, especially one of my professors that I had for honors, Chad Terrell, him and former Dean Rick Scott had sponsored a trip where they took students to London to study The Beatles. It's a class based on the Beatles. They had that class was taught. They went to London to experience some of the things that The Beatles were talking about and understanding rock and pop music as a whole. London was a good place for them to understand that and everthing like that. I think that was the good thing to take advantage of. But yes, study abroad was the only thing I think I probably missed out on. Or,

like I said, if was everything I did get me to the experience right now, me talking to you about my experience, I would not change anything for the world. I'll settle for it all.

DT [01:22:44] Beautiful, I love that ending. OK, well, that's all I have for today, thank you Mylon so much for your time and participating in this oral history project for the Schedler Honors College with us. Is there anything that you don't get to share that you want to share?

MB [01:23:03] Oh, if you're watching out there, if you have access to this. Is a big thank you for me on behalf of my family, my friends, it really shaped me for the better. It has just been a joy being around you all for four years and challenging everything that I thought I knew. I was near great thinking that I wasn't good enough, to them showing me everything I needed to know and even beyond what I am, just making sure that I do that. That exemplifies through my work, through my involvement, through being myself. They never asked you to be anything other than myself. I hope that as time goes on, I've madea impact on that community just how much they impact on me.

DT [01:24:01] OK. Alright, thank you so Mylon.

MB [01:24:05] Alright, thank you.