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Roy Rodriguez 0:04

Alright so I'm with Allison. My name is Roy Rodriguez and it is 11:05 on a Saturday November 23rd, 2019. My first question would be to tell me a little more about yourself and your family upbringing.

Allison Dentinger 0:20

My name is Allison Dentinger. I grew up in the Rochester area. I grew up physically in the Charlotte portion of the city. I have a nuclear family that is still together. Two parents are still married and I have an older sister and a younger sister. I graduated from Penfield High school and in middle school I transferred there. I've pretty much lived and worked in this area ever since. I did a quick stint down in New York City for a little bit.

Roy Rodriguez 0:57

Awesome. What did you do in New York City?

Allison Dentinger 0:59

I lived at the Catholic Worker down there and worked a soup line and lived in community.

Roy Rodriguez 1:06

That's amazing. What was your parents educational background?

Allison Dentinger 1:12

So my mom has a degree in nursing. My dad has an associate's in not sure what.... but maybe just like liberal arts.

Roy Rodriguez 1:28

So did they influence you to go to college? Was it like an expectation?

Allison Dentinger 1:32

Yeah, I think it was an expectation to go to college. From a young age, that school was to be taken very seriously. I think I always knew I was going to go to college. I didn't always know what I was going to do.

Roy Rodriguez 1:47

What age do you think you realized what you wanted to do? For a major or for a future job?

Allison Dentinger 1:54

Yeah, I'm still figuring that out. I think I've always really liked social studies and like that component of the humanities. I think maybe in like high school, I was thinking it would be fun to be a social studies teacher. Didn't quite end up going that way with careers. I've done a few different things and I am still trying to figure out what I'm doing with my life. Yeah, I think pretty early on, I think I knew I liked social studies. That's why I studied it.

Unknown Speaker 2:29

What was your education experience like and what was your high school life like?

Allison Dentinger 2:33

Yeah, so I took Regents classes in high school and enjoyed them and did well but it was also a lot of work. School has never traditionally come easy to me. So if I put in the effort, I can usually be fairly successful. Then I actually chose to go to MCC. I just wanted to build a better foundation of habits and not wanting to be in debt. I had planned to transfer to Geneseo. But I ended up transferring to Brockport and finishing my degree there. I didn't want to have to reapply to a bunch of grad schools and Dr. Corey

was like just stay here. I just had to fill out the application and I got admitted into the master's program, which was great to not have to do all the extra work.

Roy Rodriguez 3:24

That's awesome. What are Regents I'm not familiar with those?

Allison Dentinger 3:29

Like the Regents New York state standard of education is regents level. Meaning that you got a 65 or above on all the state tests. So you get like a local diploma. If you have a IEP you can have a regents Diploma or you can have a regents diploma with an advanced designation.

Roy Rodriguez 3:47

Interesting. Yeah, I'm from Texas. It was a little different there but we had something similar.

Allison Dentinger 3:54

Yeah, Regents is like the New York's version of specific standards.

Roy Rodriguez 4:00

Exactly, interesting. How did MCC prepare you for Brockport?

Allison Dentinger 4:07

Yeah, so I took both education classes and all my liberal arts classes there and some history courses. I was very thankful to you know, MCC, I think takes a lot of slack. I took writing intensive history courses and reading intensive history courses. I was really nervous when I transferred to Brockport, that I wasn't gonna be academically strong enough. I was very fortunate that the first semester I was there, I was admitted right into the education program, which I was shocked that had happened. For education, you have to apply to that as well. You don't just get into it automatically. I had already had some experience in a classroom, so MCC really allowed me to jump right in and be a kind of ahead of other people that were on their first semester in that program having already taken education courses. I know I was really nervous. I took research methods ... The history course I was really nervous that I couldn't handle. But I had a really supportive professor that did great job of like, it's okay that you didn't take intense history courses, like everyone else in the class, but you did even if you don't realize it.

Roy Rodriguez 5:14

That's awesome. That sounds like a good experience.

Allison Dentinger 5:16

Yeah, I mean, I think College in general is a lot of work. But I was very fortunate to have great professors in the history department especially.

Roy Rodriguez 5:26

It's nice to hear like a positive attitude towards it, because there's a lot of people that are just like, I hate school and can't wait to be done with school.

Allison Dentinger 5:33

Yeah, I don't know that you could pay me to go back but...

Roy Rodriguez 5:35

Exactly. Exactly. I like the positive mindset.

Allison Dentinger 5:39

Yeah, yeah. I still talked to a couple people which is nice.

Roy Rodriguez 5:42

Which is helpful, long lasting friends. That's awesome. So what was your college experience like at Brockport in comparison to MCC?

Allison Dentinger 5:59

At Brockport I did not stay on campus where I lived on campus at MCC. I kind of had like a little niche of people that I got to know at Brockport that we're all studying history or education. Whereas MCC, I've met more of like a broad gamut of people from more diverse backgrounds. That was kind of a cool experience to get to do a little bit of both. The expectations I think were a lot like higher at Brockport. But I don't know if that's just like being an upperclassman versus an underclassmen like academically what you're expected to produce. Even in like the master's program, I didn't think the work was all that hard. There was just so much of it.

Roy Rodriguez 6:41

Yeah, pretty tedious. Definitely. How did your friends change from Brockport to MCC would you say? Can you talk to me about this little niche of people? Can you describe them?

Allison Dentinger 6:54

Yeah, at MCC I was friends with the people I lived in the dorms with or had kind of met in some of those classes. Whereas like at Brockport, the couple people I still regularly talk to were history nerds like me. It's still fun. I see people from time to time and we have little inside jokes of things we learned in undergrad. So that's kind of fun.

Roy Rodriguez 7:24

So were there any more like influencing factors in you going to Brockport?

Allison Dentinger 7:32

Yeah, one of the things that really appealed to me at Brockport is that there's a dual program for special ed. I wanted that special ed certification. I had some really good experiences with special ed. They kind of pigeon holed me into special ed when I graduated, so I was never really able to teach straight social studies. When I was teaching. I'm not teaching anymore.

Roy Rodriguez 7:53

Okay, what do you know?

Allison Dentinger 7:55

I work as a case manager at like, primarily a Medicare/Medicaid clinic in the city of Rochester. I help people with whatever social determinants get in the way of their health and then I live at the house of hospitality down the road and do the social justice and soup kitchen works that come with being there.

Roy Rodriguez 8:19

That's amazing.

Allison Dentinger 8:20

Yes that is why I'm so tired right now!

Roy Rodriguez 8:23

It's a rewarding job though?

Allison Dentinger 8:25

Yeah, it can be. I think it is a lot of work. I think more than anything like yeah, we learned a lot of great content, but like, being a history major, you're taught to think. That was really helpful. I think when I'm in situations like this, I know how to think on my feet really well.

Roy Rodriguez 8:43

Definitely, definitely. Did Brockport meet your expectations and goals of higher learning?

Allison Dentinger 8:53

Yeah, I think so. I think it's hard to be so young and have to be like figuring out what you want to do the rest of your life. I function more like a social worker now than I do a teacher but that social studies background allows me to understand a lot of the justice components. I helped pass legislation in 2019. Like, how many other history majors can do that? Say they did that, but at the same a lot of my undergrad learning about our government from a higher level. So, I think one of the things that I would challenge, the history department didn't do enough of with the education program, was there's just not enough like hands on experience of like, what, what needed to actually happen whereas for the ed placements. The state says that you have to have field hours before you can do your student teaching. I think sometimes we just produce people who like know how to read, write and analyze things. I do know how to do all that but I also think that like my combination of experiences also, tell me what it is like the like meet with legislators and do all of that.

Roy Rodriguez 10:08

What clicked in your mind that helped you evolve into the situation that you're at now? So it sounds like you took the beginning tools of what you learned in social studies and you turned into more of like a hands on experience?

Allison Dentinger 10:22

I mean, I think I started hanging out at the the place I live now years ago and I just started to see the work that was being done there. It was like social studies and practice instead of just like talking about how we wanted to like solve our urban development problems. I feel like I'm actually getting to engage in different ways to do that and how to solve. We talk so much about like the past and like, instead of just like, analyzing that, and why did that happen? I'm like, wow, how can we use what we know about the past impact what's happening right now and build about our future?

Roy Rodriguez 10:57

Definitely. During your time in college, were there any big moments or life experiences that you'd like to share something that you always think back of when you think of Brockport maybe?

Allison Dentinger 11:12

I think something that will forever be a Brockport joke.... I obviously have the degree in history and we did like a special history department celebration and you were able to choose a professor that could do like a two minute speech on you. They forgot to speak about me and I don't do well with conflict. I get stressed out by that. I was just gonna go and then my mom went up to Dr. Leslie at the end and was like, just so you know, my daughter wasn't spoken about. So that's just always like my Brockport joke. So Dr. Ireland says that's the worst mistake he's ever made of missing that. It's like always my like my little Brockport joke so I don't know I just had I did have a lot of fun there like going out on like Friday nights and hanging out with you know other history people and I have a friend that I graduated with that actually works on the campus now. Something with alumni he does. I like went out for homecoming a few weeks back and it's really fun to like be out there and get to say I'm a Brockport alum and I was also on the club gymnastics team. Which was a lot of fun and a lot of work.

Roy Rodriguez 12:39

So you had a pretty full schedule when you were there?

Allison Dentinger 12:41

It didn't ever stop.

Roy Rodriguez 12:43

Was there any other like clubs or anything that you partaked in?

Allison Dentinger 12:49

Yeah, I was in the history forum for a while and I was the vice president of the history forum for a while. So that was a lot of fun and we went on field trips and we debated different crazy topics. There was a couple visiting professors there at the time. We had like collected a bunch of books and sold books and like we just like overwhelmed Dr. Morris' office with book donations and he was like these have got to get out of here so just like little memories like that. I think my favorite course I took was on pirates. Dr. Schutte, who's not there anymore, taught like an elective history course that was a four or 500 like swing course and it was it was on pirates.

Roy Rodriguez 13:34

Well now I have to hear one fun fact about pirates.

Allison Dentinger 13:38

I wrote my paper on Somali pirates. It was funny to talk about like how like the we think of like Golden Age piracy exclusively and it was really a short period of time. I took world history on film with Dr. Daly. You had to compare movies to like real life and so I've written two research papers on pirates. I compared the Pirates of the Caribbean movies. So that was really good. I felt like I really enjoyed a lot of my history courses. I did the civil war online as well.

Roy Rodriguez 14:18

So you touched on a lot of different topics?

Allison Dentinger 14:20

Yeah! Dr. Davila taught one on Jihad That was really good. So I don't know I had a lot of fun with like the research papers and like really digging into.... I remember in my junior year or my senior writing for Dr. Leslie one on the Scopes trial and when I handed it in to turnitin.com, it was like a 12% match rate. I like had a little freaked out. I was like that so I that's really really high and he goes to you how many people a year right on the Scopes trial? He's like, I would be astonished if it was any lower.

Roy Rodriguez 14:54

You were sweating bullets.

Allison Dentinger 14:57

I was really nervous. I was like, Everything I have is under quotes. He's like, everything you have is in direct quotes, like looking at me like I'm crazy.

Roy Rodriguez 15:05

Right, right. MLA format and everything.

Allison Dentinger 15:07

Oh man, no, I'm a history major we do Chicago style.

Roy Rodriguez 15:12

I should have done my research. I'm sorry.

Allison Dentinger 15:14

That's okay. It was actually tough because in education you do it in MLA and in history you do it in Chicago, but I love Chicago style.

Roy Rodriguez 15:21

That's where it's at?

Allison Dentinger 15:22

It's so much better because I don't want to have to be like interrupted, as I'm like reading. If I want to see the source, I will look at it.

Roy Rodriguez 15:30

You don't want it in your face? Parentheses! Page number!

Allison Dentinger 15:36

I'm not actually looking at it. So what's the point?

Roy Rodriguez 15:39

Very true.

Allison Dentinger 15:40

I can just skim down if I'm like, Whoa, I don't know if I believe that. And I'm like, Okay, let's just see if I believe this source is credible.

Roy Rodriguez 15:46

You look and it is just Wikipedia down there.

Allison Dentinger 15:49

Sometimes it is. You'd be amazed.

Roy Rodriguez 15:50

That's hilarious. So once you graduated from Brockport, what was life like? Right after that,

Allison Dentinger 16:02

In graduating undergrad, I started teaching at Monroe at Boces, where I had done my student teaching. And that was great. I had started my Masters so I was doing that and I then transferred to Victor high school and I taught there while I was getting my masters so I, I remember like going through and just being like, it's fine. I can just do this, just so much coffee. Taking classes that first-year teaching was really stressful and then taking classes in a new district, that like second year teaching was also really stressful. It was really good. And I just remember like submitting my last like research paper for my masters and just being like is this it? this is really it! It's amazing how like things change, like as you becoming a real adult and get like the real jobs like things that stress me out in undergrad are just fine.

Roy Rodriguez 16:54

It all seems like small problems. I have three more classes and then I graduate. I'm freaking out a bit.

Allison Dentinger 17:01

It's exciting. What do you thinking you want to do?

Roy Rodriguez 17:04

I'm thinking I have a job at Paychecks. I also work at Target, but I want to go full time at Paychecks. Doing like marketing or sales.

Allison Dentinger 17:13

Okay. Nice. Welcome to the real world.

Roy Rodriguez 17:17

I know it's tough. It's tough, but exciting. I get to do fun interviews like this before I go. So is there anything you would tell your past self, knowing what you have experienced and the knowledge that you've gained?

Allison Dentinger 17:35

Yeah, I think, you know, my parents have this like expectation that I am continuously shattering of like, you have to be independent and you have to be able to take care of yourself and you get one job and you stick with it your entire life and just like trusting that that's not how it has to be and it's okay that it's not that way. Since graduating, I've had you know, a few different jobs. I lived in New York City in a house of hospitality and didn't get paid and it was great. And it was an experience and right now I'm fighting off bedbugs my house because I live in a homeless shelter and I work in a homeless shelter like, so just like it's okay that like it's a wild ride and like, it's about the experiences as much as it is about, like the achievements. Whereas I think I was just kind of like, this is what I have to do to get my degree have to get this job and this is what I'm gonna do.

Roy Rodriguez 18:30

It is not so structured? It's more of a roll with the punches type of thing?

Allison Dentinger 18:33

Yeah. I don't know if I died tomorrow, I want to know that like I had good experiences and that I did something good and that I wasn't blind to the needs of the people around me.

Roy Rodriguez 18:42

Absolutely. Absolutely. Do you have any closing statements? That was all the questions that I had prepared.

Allison Dentinger 18:49

Yeah, I mean, I'm thankful for my educational experiences. I'm thankful for the activism that I get to do now as a result, you know. I'm thankful that I had professors that modeled it well, and that do it.

Roy Rodriguez 19:01

Shout out to Brockport University.

Allison Dentinger 19:03

I know I wouldn't, I wouldn't have changed that one. I'm debt free. I don't know how people that tell me they went there and they have like a 100 grand in debt and I'm like how do you have a 100 grand in debt? How many times did you switch your major?

Roy Rodriguez 19:17

Did you graduate debt free?

Allison Dentinger 19:19

Yeah.

Roy Rodriguez 19:19
That's awesome.

Allison Dentinger 19:21
Yeah, I mean, I had transferred and I used to just like empty my bank account at the start of every semester to pay for it and then like work, work, work, work and pay it off again and just and then I paid for my master's because I was working. Yeah, that was the other thing balancing a job was tricky. I didn't go out to eat every night like other people do. I didn't go out drinking every night like other people do. I was intentional about saving financially.

Roy Rodriguez 19:46
A lot of home cooked meals?

Allison Dentinger 19:53
A lot of home cooked meals.

Roy Rodriguez 19:55
But it's worth it.

Allison Dentinger 19:56
It is worth it. Yeah. Me and I think like a lot of people were like, how are you gonna go, you know, a year of not getting paid how you gonna pay your bills? I was like, I don't really have bills. Everyone's paying student loans.

Roy Rodriguez 20:12
So they provided you shelter, obviously and then food?

Allison Dentinger 20:21
That's all you need. Yeah. Just adjusting those expectations of what you need for life. We're very greedy, I think in this society and we choose not to see how the other half lives.

Roy Rodriguez 20:33
How does the other half live?

Allison Dentinger 20:35
Paycheck to paycheck and in significant amounts of debt. The rent in this city is very high. Too expensive.

Roy Rodriguez 20:46
I used to live off of Monroe and it wasn't cheap.

Allison Dentinger 20:50
Yeah, I'm desperately trying to control that rent. Yeah, we're trying to get the city Rochester to opt into rent stabilization.

Roy Rodriguez 20:59
And what would that do?

Allison Dentinger 21:00

It would mean any. So we just got the mayor to like propose what's called the vacancy survey, which is the first step for rent stabilization. It would mean that any qualifying unit, which is buildings with six or more units that were built before 1974 gets rent stabilized, meaning that the rent is set and then a rent guidelines board that is set up determines how much the rent can increase each year. So they can call for like rent free and rent roll backs. Two out of five Rochester tenants are rent burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their rent, or their income on rent.

Roy Rodriguez 21:38

So what would you say to someone who would want to start making a difference in their community?

Allison Dentinger 21:44

Just get involved, find a niche and go with it.

Roy Rodriguez 21:48

What do you think? What would you suggest? What niche to pursue for someone because I feel like I don't really know I'm not really sure what avenues there are.

Allison Dentinger 21:59

I'm super passionate about housing, justice and housing, tenant rights and community development and develop without displacement. And what does it mean to make Rochester for all. We talked about the two cities. There's pretty significant poverty in this city. We don't like to talk about it.

Roy Rodriguez 22:21

Absolutely. I think I'm gonna end it there.

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