

Speaker 1:

It means having, um, a group of friends that I can connect with because we come from similar backgrounds and we have, uh, similar stories this year. Um, it also means, um, being able to serve as a resource for one another. Um, and just because I know something doesn't mean that you don't know something, we can't share our lived experiences because you never know that they might be similar or even if they're different, we'll find something in between them

Speaker 2:

FLI. And it's Def, uh, and it's little literal definition. I would describe it as first generation and or low income student. And for me, when I say first gen, I'm not the first gen, I'm not the first person in my family to go to college. My parents have gone to college, although it wasn't in America, they have gone to college. Um, so I definitely identify as a low income student coming from kind of not, not a humongous family, but a family where it's our nuclear family, but also like our grandparents and some of her relatives and the income that my dad has is not a lot to sustain all of us living together. We have to put a lot of limits on our expenses. We have to think a lot about before making a purchase. We really think, do I need this right now? If I don't need this, if I don't have this right now, am I going to die? So that's how I would kind of describe my experience as a fly student, but I wouldn't, I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm unhappy. Like I'm very content.

Speaker 3:

So for me, fly is, is a difficult question to ask, just because I've thought about my identity as a FLI student, um, specifically thinking about how my mother went to college. Um, but when I think about the ways that her college experiences different from my, in terms of like the types of colleges that we went to, I ended up defining myself as a FLI student. Um, but I think that the important in understanding what fly means and transgressing a lot of the norms associated with fly students is understanding that each and every student has their own definition of what it means to be a fly student, what it means to be low income and what it means to be first-generation. Um, and then from there, you know, we, we all get to define what that means for us and apply it to, um, our understanding of college in our college experience.

Speaker 2:

I, part of Columbia, I feel like, unless I'm with our cohort, I don't really talk a lot about money. So I think talking about money has been kind of a, it's kind of a sensitive, or just like an awkward topic to talk about, especially, especially because a lot of the students are Columbia and Barnard are mostly from families or upper middle class in most cases, not all, but at Barnard, I feel like because of the HEOP community and the support that we have through here, I haven't felt excluded. I haven't felt like I was trying to just fill a quota. I actually felt pretty welcomed at here at Barnard. And when I told my professors, um, uh, HEOP scholar, they never, I have never been looked down on. They just still accept me as who I am. So it gives me, yeah, just, I think my experience as a fly student, hasn't been very demeaning. I think it's actually put the more in a spot where I can Hmm. Where I can just be who I am without being afraid

Speaker 1:

Of being a slicing to me. Um, Barnard has

Speaker 4:

Been a great experience. I've been able to connect with different clubs on campus that are service resources for myself. Um, specifically I know as a freshman, it was hard to like purchase certain textbooks or get access to different courseworks and stuff. And I was able to either go to my office or even through the FLI internship partnership, um, uh, at the library, I was able to like sit there and be able to read the textbook and do all the work that I needed to. So, so far it's been a great experience.

Speaker 3:

I think my identity as a FLI, you're referring to like my identity as a FLI student. I think that that has definitely like, it has come to life more. I had to confront that identity more in college compared to high school. Um, one reason is because like I got older and responsibilities changed, but another reason is because of the high school that I went to, most of us identified with the same racial and ethnic backgrounds. Well, not, I think those were very diverse, but our racial backgrounds tended to be Black and, or like Latinx. And then like our class backgrounds were pretty much the same as well. Um, so I don't really have to confront it as much in high school. And I also went to a high school that while there were a lot of problems, one of the thing that they made sure it was going to happen is that we didn't have to like, like money was not going to be a marker of our experience at the school.

Speaker 3:

So everything was like paid for, for us, for like, I would say like 95% of the part, like we couldn't even have senior dues because they didn't want somebody to feel like they couldn't do something. So we had to do something that like, we had to do things that like worked within their budget that could be like dispersed among us. Um, as far as Barnard, like I think that sometimes when, even like meal plans, for example, that's a way in which like my class identity was revealed to me. Like if I'm struggling to like, if at the beginning of the semester, I want to save some money on my tuition bill and I have to get a cheaper meal plan, um, realizing that, you know, regardless I still have to eat, um, the conversation with my class and money in low income in my identity as like a low income student is going to come back up.

Speaker 3:

Um, so like, I think it's like the identity part, like what's weird is like over the last, I guess seven years is the time between high school. And now like my income, like my family's income has pretty much been the same. However, like even though it's been static, my, the way that I have to interact with it has changed due to like the spaces that have entered being born at Columbia. And like, knowing that, you know, there is a very specific class tied to like the people who typically go to these schools. And even though I'm going to try to have, I'm going to have to try my best to exist within this space. I still have to remember like where I, where I'm coming from and like what my means are at the end of the day. So, um, the difference has really been like a conversation of like confronting it versus being able to just like live with it. Um, so yeah, that's how I would answer that question.

Speaker 2:

So fly definitely was a very new term for me when I came into college, um, I grew up in Queens and it's like, not, not a lot of people that are affluent. Like they may be, middle-class a lot more low income than middle-class like, from my experience personally, a lot of my friends were low income or they were just like lower middle class. I don't think I had anyone who were like upper middle class or like middle-class. So I thought that was just kind of the norm. Like, I didn't really question, oh, who had money? Who did it? Like, I never questioned the power of money or the amount of money, so what needs to have power. But after I came into Barnard, I started realizing that all the students, not all, but most of the students

that we go to school with are from affluent families and the amount of money that they have, like the amount, like the economic status is way beyond what I can comprehend, but it's not something that I can even imagine.

Speaker 2:

So to know that there are so many people who are so affluent, like who can just write up a \$35,000 check room semester's tuition was just like, how, like, how is that possible? Like our family is living almost like we can't even write out a \$35,000 check for a year away. You would have to break it up. And just like \$35,000 after we pay rent, pay for food. That's not, we don't have that. We don't have that left, but to know that was just really shocking. And I think when I came in my first semester, I was just like, I was, I think that was one aspect that really kind of just put me in a very lonely spot. Despite the fact I had all my HEOP cohort, it was just, oh, what am I doing in the middle? All these affluent people, like, will they look down on me?

Speaker 2:

I think, I think it's the imposter syndrome, right. Or imposter phenomenon as they call it. Now, I think that's what I was feeling like, am I really worthy to be here? So I think that was kind of like what I was struggling with when I first launched at Atari was why you came into college. I just really was trying to divide people, categorize people that are out. Are they flat? Or are they, they may be middle-class income. Are they FLI? They're low income, but not like from [inaudible] or how much more middle class, upper middle, middle class with the FLI. [inaudible]

Speaker 2:

like, how did people different? How was [inaudible]not half power? So I think after I keep grappling with that and I think not all, but most of the times that we go to question my identity, [inaudible], it's not something that I can even imagine. So to know that there are so many people who are so affluent, like you can just write off \$35,000 checks. Semester's tuition was just like, how, like, how is that possible? Like our family is living almost like we can't even write out a \$35,000 check for a year away. You would have to break it up. And just like \$35,000 after we pay rent, pay for food. That's not, we don't have that. We don't have that left. But to know that was just really shocking. And I think when I came in my first semester, I was just like, I was, I think that was one aspect that really kind of just put me in a very lonely spot, despite the fact that I had all my HEOP cohort, it was just, oh, what am I doing in the middle?

Speaker 2:

All these affluent people, like, will they look down on me? I think, I, I think it's the imposter syndrome, right. Or imposter phenomenon as they call it. Now, I think that's what I was feeling like, am I really worthy to be here? So I think that was kind of like what I was struggling with and when I first approached the term fly and it was just an, I personally was trying to divide people like categorize people into, oh, are they fly? Or are they not? Like if they're first gen, but not low income, are they FLI or is it if they're low income, but not first gen, are they low or they FLI like, or how much money do you need to have to be considered low income? Like, is it what the New York state says with the [inaudible] with a five person family? It's like, if you're making \$6,000, \$60,000 or less you're low, like, is it those standards? How do people differentiate between what's low-income and what's not? And what, so I think those are kind of the questions that I was grappling with. And I think that's what kind of try to like, kind of make me question my identity, just like, as an individual coming from Queens, thinking that low income, or just the amount of money that we made as a family was just the norm.

Speaker 1:

So I had never heard of the FLI identity before college. Um, like I heard about like the EOP programs and the HOP programs. And I was like, okay, cool. Like, this is such a great initiative for students like myself, but, um, I've never heard about like being first gen or even low income. And so when I came to college and this was kind of just thrown at me, it's something that I took on, but it's, I don't know if this makes sense, but it's like something that I was kind of forced to take on. I don't know. It just became a part of my identity without me necessarily trying to make it a part of my identity. Like even though I'm a first gen student, um, it doesn't mean that I would just go around with like F uh, FGLI like tattooed across my forehead, you know? So it's just, it's something new that I learned in college. Um, but I'm getting to know it better now that I like transitioned into it.