

Speaker 1:

You know, being a first-generation low-income person and being really resilient and just kind of starting a life and like beginning a journey that your parents never gone through,

Speaker 2:

Um, being FLI. I never actually heard that acronym before, so it makes it sound cooler, I guess. Um, but yeah, to me, I feel like it's very subjective for everyone. Um, coming into college. I never really knew where to categorize myself because I do have like older sisters and stuff that have been through college that have literally shown me the ropes of like, okay, this is what you need to do while in high school is how you need to prepare yourself. So I felt like I was very fortunate within that way, but also, you know, kind of battling between, you know, having immigrant parents, them coming from Nigeria, them also trying to show me the way of like, okay, this is exactly what you need to do. Like your sisters are here to help you. So that first-generation aspect. It definitely does trickle down to me because like I said, every, every one of my siblings experience with college and my parents as well, like everyone has their own unique story.

Speaker 2:

Everyone has their own unique story. It's navigated differently for different people. My oldest sister for example, went to Howard. So that definitely looked different for her back in what, 2004 than it does for me entering bonded in 2017. So coming in, I mean, I joined through the ASEP program, so I definitely felt supported with the students that I met, even though I have a lot to say on that, like the ASEP program itself. Um, I definitely fostered a lot of great friendships and relationships from that program. Um, so in that way, I really felt, you know, as you even mentioned, like we're not CUNY students. So I felt really supported going into college to the point where I'm just like, yes, you are first-generation, but you know, you have these people that have been leading you all this way to be like type I've been through. This is exactly what you need to do like [inaudible], but I've been through this exactly what you need to do. So I don't know. I felt like it, I am first generation in the sense that, okay, this is my own unique experience. Like no matter what, no one can do college for me, I'm doing it for myself. Um, but at the same time, I'm very fortunate for the people that I've had, like leading me in that way.

Speaker 3:

What first-generation low-income student means to me is being a part of a group of people who are most resilient, supportive, and hardworking. There are so many hard deals we have faced from a very small age with very limited resources to overcome them. There has been so many firsts for me just to look back at a few in the last few years, applying for colleges, filling out the FAFSA, applying for loans, looking for jobs and internships and even deciding what my major will be. So there has been a lot of hurdles in that way. Although my parents have been one of the most hardworking and motivated people, but being immigrants, not being aware of how the education system is how the job market means that I had to navigate all two by myself from a very small age. So it has been quite difficult with lots of hardships, but I feel that's what made me who I am today. And he just taught me how to be tough and resourceful and be able to overcome any obstacles that comes along my way. So that to me is being a first-generation low-income student, being resourceful, being hardworking, being resilient, and yeah, just be who I am. And I'm proud of my identity and I'm part of the community. And part of,

Speaker 2:

Uh, if we're talking about class and all of that stuff coming into Barnard, I was the amount of wealth that I saw at Barnard. I was just like, this is crazy. I mean, I mean, even coming from high school, I went to like a predominantly Russian high school. Like I wouldn't say that everyone was like just some mega mega rich people, but wealth, the way wealth is displayed at that school at Barnard, I'm just, it, it was definitely a mind opener for me. And it really allowed me to realize, you know, my place in society and my family's place in society. And, you know, navigating that through college because as much as people want to deny that, that doesn't really factor into who you meet and who you like. It definitely does people, birds of a feather flock together. Like you, you want to be with your people.

Speaker 2:

You want to be with people that make you comfortable, whether that be class, whether that be education, no matter what. And it's those similarities that actually allow you to foster those relationships with people. And if you don't have it not saying that it's not possible, but it definitely is harder when you can't relate to someone on that level. Even the most menial things going out and stuff like that. So it definitely was an eye opener for me. And that honestly tailored my experience to, you know, who my friends are, who I found myself hanging out with on the weekends. So I found myself studying with, you know, who I could be real with in terms of like, oh my gosh, this is a hard class. Like, what do I do? And then as people that have like gone to boarding school, gone to private school since they were in diapers that are just, you know, breezing through, catching crews. And, and it definitely put a lot into perspective for

Speaker 1:

Me. Right. I feel like because like Barnard, Columbia is like a private school where like the nation's, I would say like most like students from like one of the most wealthiest, like families attend, a lot of them view low-income first-generation college students kind of like exotic Pokemons or like exotic Pokemon cards. It's like they see us like portrayed like in the media, but a lot of them don't understand like low income, like there's different spectrums of being low income, right? Like there's poverty and there's like average, low income. You know what I mean? It's like on a spectrum, but a lot of them, when they think low income, they just think like poverty, like third world country. If that makes sense, they don't really think that low-income students like exist in America. I think

Speaker 3:

The first thing that comes to my mind is the, my first semester or the first two semesters, especially adjusting into the academic load and the like it's quite advanced in Barnard, Columbia. And I can speak for myself. I come from a public high school in Jamaica, Queens. We didn't even have a proper library or computer lab in my school. We didn't have many AP classes. I only had like two or three AP courses. And once I came to Barnard, most of the students went to private school, came from IB or a specialized public high school. So I felt like that [inaudible] meant, um, or the kind of course load was quite rigorous for me. And therefore I had to do a lot of work behind the screen, like working many hours during the week, spending my weekends in the library. For instance, when I took calc three for the first time I haven't done calc AB or like I haven't done calc BC ever.

Speaker 3:

And most of the people have done that in econometrics. I never done stats in my high school. And that's a lot. I had to learn that even how to write a proper English paper, I didn't know there was a proper fat format. There was a thesis statement, topic, sentence, analyzes, evidence, counter argument. And those

are the things I learned on my first semester. So to really get a grasp of all those in that period of time, along with the mental and financial constraint that comes along being a FLI student, it was quite tough. And I will forever remember this first two semesters, how hard it has been. So yeah.

Speaker 2:

Yeah. I definitely wouldn't even say that I would have called myself a FLI student in high school at all. Like even the people that I found myself hanging around, I, me and my friend, actually my friend and I, we have this running joke on like, oh, we went to two separate high schools based off like the people that I hung out with versus the people that he hung out with. And it's crazy because in that, like, even in my high school, I was like, what? Top 3% of my graduating class. Like I was there. I thought I was the it girl, like, this is it for me. Like, oh, I'm going to go to this place. I'm want to go to that place. I'm going to show them like, I'm so smart. I'm so this I'm so bad. And you know, I had people in my corner backing to me, like my school was like, this is amazing.

Speaker 2:

Like I did the Harvard pre-college program. They're like, oh girl, you're a champion. Like you're a pioneer, the award ceremony. Like everything. It just felt, it felt really good. It felt really good to feel appreciated, you know, and to feel seen as well. And then I got to Barnard and, you know, it's sort of this like big fish, small pond type of identity where it's like, okay, Ty, but yeah, you were the big fish, small pond in your high school, but now you're in a pond and we're all big fish and everyone's smart. And there are levels to like, even like the level of intelligence in terms of, okay, I had this preparation, I had X amount of preparation to come into a school I'd burn out. So that's why I'm like breezing through my classes where I had this amount of preparation to come to school by Barna.

Speaker 2:

That's why I'm bringing in my classes. So coming into college, I would say that, that, that was that really one key difference. Like, I mean, even though the ASAP program tried to sort of have us adapt to like, okay, this is how you be challenged academic. It was honestly demeaning. If I'm going to be quite honest, it was quite demeaning because it's not as if you know where some type of remedial students going into the school, like for the first time, like everyone is smart. And even that it's subjective within itself for what you can call smart because honestly, coming into college, my perception of intelligence and people that are smart has drastically changed from how I am as a senior right now, because I don't even like to measure myself in terms of academics anymore. But if you were talking typo from four years ago, you know, going from 2017, summer of 2017, going into college, going into the ASAP program, you're like, oh yeah, straight.

Speaker 2:

A's like, you have to have that 4.0 GPA. You have to have that. Like, I need to do what I need to do it. And it's also that pressure from not only from institutions like Barnard, like my high school that I was at, but also familial pressure as well. It was my parents pushing me. Like, you need to do this, you need to do this. Look at how your sisters have done this. You need to follow in their footsteps. You need to be even better. You need to be even greater. So, you know, having those pressures on me, um, and trying to keeping that in mind, like that internalized stuff coming into college, I was just like, wow, like people have been ahead of the game. Like I don't even see where I can compare even freshman year classes that I was put in. I'm just like, Hmm, this is, this is not really, as I would say, like a challenge for you to

say, okay, yeah, let's actually put these students in the class that need to be in, it's sort of like, Hmm, are we really giving them the resources or is this literally demeaning their character for who they are?

Speaker 2:

So I would say that was one really big key difference. Uh, academia was, uh, a very huge difference for me because the type of that I was in high school is definitely not the type of that I am senior year, you know, wrapping things up

Speaker 1:

Pros is you definitely meet like a lot of different diverse groups of people. Like, not just like socially, but also like economically, like people that I probably would not have crossed paths with before coming into college. Because like, obviously like growing up, like I mostly attended schools in New York city. Like New York city is very diverse for most people who go to those schools. Aren't new Yorkers versus here. There's like international students and, um, from other areas domestically. So you also meet a lot of people who have very different political views as you, if that makes sense. Um, but I feel like the cons is a lot of universities or institutions. They promise you things before like learning you into their school. And a lot of times they actually don't deliver their promises as well as,

Speaker 4:

Um, I guess

Speaker 1:

Like meeting different people from diverse backgrounds also has its cons because a lot of times you have very opposing views and it's really hard to understand that where did they get certain notions from? Like their political ideologies is like very, very foreign to you.

Speaker 2:

I came into college thinking, oh, I'm going to be a physics major. I'm going to be a physics and econ major. Like I'm going to do it. I was so good in physics in high school. Like, what's the difference? Who cares? I'm going to do it. How I want. I tell you that I really, I think it was like the third day or so of classes and we were just getting straight into it. And when I tell you, I literally could not follow through with anything. The professor was saying not one single thing I can pinpoint. And it was like, oh wow. Yeah, I know this. Like, this is great, honestly. And then looking around the room, I'm just like, wait, is everyone feeling the same way as me? Or is this not how it's supposed to be? And I feel like, yes, there is imposter syndrome.

Speaker 2:

But specifically at Barnard, Columbia, people really know how to mask that they don't know stuff really, really well. So here I am looking around like being honest with myself, like, I'm sorry, like I'm not going to be something I'm not like, does everyone get this material? Like what's going on? And it's, everyone's like getting stuff down, jotting stuff down, doing a little calculation. So we're making it seem like, oh my gosh, like, what am I doing wrong? So imposter syndrome definitely kicked in at that moment where I was like, girl, you're in the big leagues now. Like, this is not, this is not a joke. This is not a game. Um, so yeah, after that, I was like, sis, you really need to reevaluate. Is it physics that you want to do? Like, why do you want to do physics? Why do you want to even be a double major physics and econ?

Speaker 2:

Like, why is that so important to you? Is it about just getting your degree in getting out, finding like, you know, full-time job or going to go post grad, your MBA, your, you know, your law degree. So thinking about that, I really put things in perspective, even type of freshman year, I was just like, Hmm, maybe I'll just stick with econ and that'll be great. But yeah, imposter syndrome definitely kicked in at that physics class. And after that, I was like, yeah, it's the add drop period still on because this is, this is definitely a drop. This is a truck,

Speaker 3:

Um, summer program for OP. And that was kind of flags changing in a way, because for the first time I made a, I found a community of people who have similar experiences and background wander, stand, who I was. And I felt that training we had for the first month was great for me. And again, I can speak for myself again, coming from a public high school with very limited resources being exposed to all those classes. Um, I think that really helped me in a way. So that was a great experience. Also, we were, we went to different kinds of offices as well. Remember we went to Google, Moody's and that was, those were like dream, like to me because nobody in my family ever worked those kinds of places or institutions. So going to this places, having conversation, interacting with those people, I think was, was a great memorable time for me, but also the kind of work I have done through my organization, whether it being a vice-president of Columbia university called Bond Law, or being a dancer at Columbia [inaudible] organizing events where like 150, 200 people came across, I think that was something which has been very memorable.

Speaker 3:

Um, being a part of my culture, things, I love things I'm passionate about and giving back to the community in a way, um, has been memorable for me while there like positives. As I mentioned earlier, a lot of character, the community with people, again, the financial resources we have received in a way by being a part of this program, OP or whatever, otherwise it wouldn't have been possible for us. So I'm grateful for those things, but again, there's, it's still very difficult, especially in elite institutions like Barnard, Columbia things. Aren't easy. For instance, there are so many clubs and organizations which look for people from a certain class, from a sort of certain social class, and many times you feel out of place, you feel like you don't belong. The kind of conversations they have. For instance, I'm talking about golf are talking about fancy vacations.

Speaker 3:

I've not, I haven't, I haven't been able to do those things growing up, uh, especially coming from a FLI, uh, background. So I think being out of place constantly is something that I have noticed, especially, uh, looking for a carrier and finance and joining all these business clubs. It has always been very like uncomfortable in ways, not being able to connect, not being able to take part on this conversation. So that's one thing, but also navigating, uh, relationships. For instance, as we talked a little bit about how to speak with professors, how to speak with advisors, asking for extensions, those things we didn't learn. So I felt like, and we didn't, we didn't get much help on those things like yes, classes academically, but how to navigate the relationships and the people during the last four years, I feel like it has been very difficult for me.

Speaker 3:

I even even have issues asking for an extension. And many times I suffered so much because of it. So I felt like, yes, there are plenty of people to help us in many ways in terms of money or in terms of books or in terms of academic ways. But what about the other aspect, the social aspect, the club aspect, or navigating relationships in the last four years. So, and sometimes it's too much to take, I feel and in a way it's very heavy. So definitely say those are some of the negatives I have experienced in my last four years.

Speaker 2:

I feel like definitely my freshman year, that was like the easiest part for me to say, oh, I want to do everything. I want to have a social life. I want to go out with my friends. You know, I want to have a little side job that Barnard babysitting shout out to Barnard babysitting because that, that came clutch for me. Um, and then as years progressed, as I moved into my sophomore year, my junior year, I was like, whoa, like things are really picking up from me. Like I need to slow down. And that definitely was like a juggle for me as well, because I realized I already told myself, like when I got into college, I wanted to be less dependent on my parents and more set up in an independent setting. So that way, when I transitioned out of college, it won't be hard for me.

Speaker 2:

Cause I already came into college with that type of mindset. But like I said, as the years progressed into college, I was like, there's really that I can do. Like I need to study for my finals. Oh, well I also have my phone bill. I need to pay exactly. I need to study for my finals. Oh, my friend just invited me to her birthday dinner now, what am I going to do? So it definitely, I had to figure out how to balance that. Even I was an RA, um, sophomore year, junior year and I would have been senior year had, you know, COVID not happened. So even juggling that RA job as well, because not only am I a student, but I'm looking out for other students, I'm supposed to be guiding them through their Barnard. I was a first year RA as well. So it was a lot of handholding.

Speaker 2:

It was a lot of late night conversations. It was a lot of, you know, taking, taking, taking away from me, um, with no reciprocal in it. So I was just, I really questioned a lot of things that I did over the years at that school. I don't regret anything. Um, but yeah, finding that balance is extremely hard because oftentimes even within social life, the clubs and organizations that I involve myself in on campus, I gave so much of my time to them because it was enjoyable for me. Like even ASA, like that's a huge part of my identity. So I'm like, oh, an ASA African student association, just for anyone that doesn't know, but it's such a huge part of my identity. Um, so I'm like, oh, I want to put my all into this. And that's what I found myself doing, putting my all into everything.

Speaker 2:

So let me turn it off. But yes, putting my all into everything and really trying to strike that balance. So at times I definitely did find myself relying on, you know, my parents, Ryan, all my sisters, like I said, there was handholding at the beginning. There was handholding. Even through sophomore, junior year, there still is. I can't do it all by myself. Um, but yeah, it still was up to me to sort of strike that balance between okay, Taibat, like you're here for a reason, you're here to get a degree and leave. So yeah, that balance was, it was hard, but I got through it.

Speaker 3:

The one, what did you say no more balancing. That was the thing for majority of the time. It's a lot, especially coming from a background like that, you always feel like you're, you don't have to give 120, 30%. You always have that within you. That all 100% is not enough. And that's how I was, especially in the first two years, like I used to over to work myself, no sleep over time myself, but I slowly realized there's so many other things that I can do in college besides doing good, getting good grades and yes, getting good grades is important, but there's so many things out there. And I felt the way I balance is sometimes the Columbia or the Barnard community can be overwhelming in many ways. Um, so I always try to go back at home during the weekend, going back to Queens, my beginning, my family, looking at the community that gives me a peace in many way.

Speaker 3:

And I felt like going back to Queens really helps me to keep a perspective because it's a huge immigrant population. Most hardworking people are coming from diverse backgrounds and they have so many dreams and aspirations. So going back home every weekend just keeps me so humbled and grounded, but also doing the things I love and enjoy. For instance, I'm a dancer, I've danced since I was seven or eight years old. When I first came to the U.S. I'm an immigrant. I came to U S when I was 17. So high to set aside my passion because I was struggling with so many things I had to work. I had to finish my sat college applications looking from after my parents. So I felt like after I came to Barnard, I felt like I have to do what I enjoy. So I started doing dancing. So I feel like things like that, going for your passion, making some time for that. Like I do, I dance almost eight to 10 hours every week. And that keeps me humble and grounded. And I feel like that's very important for my physical and mental wellbeing. So yeah, that helped me to stay balanced that way. But again, there was no balance for most of the time.

Speaker 2:

I don't even know. I guess like a scenario that I could think of is when, you know, you need to tell someone like, Hey, hello, I'm FLI. Don't know, treat me this way. I'm not the same. Like, I don't know how to put into words, but that's what I, that's what really comes to mind for me. And not to say it as necessarily like using as an excuse to do whatever, whatever, ulterior motives, but as a way for people to actually be like accommodating and be like, okay, let me acknowledge this person's background. Let me acknowledge where this person's coming from. And let me see in what ways I can help like that, that, that needs to be done. So I hope that answered the question. I don't, I don't, that sounds so cool though, FLI card.

Speaker 1:

I feel like this identity has made me stronger because it makes me think a lot more critical, not just like about my actions, because you know, like, you know, like tokenism or like when people like, see you like the stereotype of being like a low-income first generation college student, they just think like, oh, you got here because you're like low-income. Not actually, because you're smart. Like, they don't really think like, oh, you're like the first one for high school to like go to a private score. The first one from your family go college. They kind of just think like, oh, you know, she can always pull the FLI card whenever she needs it. That's probably why she's here. Um, so like always remember, like you're kind of representing like a whole community of people every time. Like, you know, you do a certain thing and stuff like that. Um, but I feel like it just impact me to become a lot stronger and also to take pride in my identity as a low-income first-generation close to it. I felt like I didn't really do that before coming to college.

Speaker 2:

I feel like this is such a multifaceted question because if I'm going to be quite frank, like I have a lot of stuff that I can say about Barnard. Like a lot of stuff that I've witnessed at that school that I'm just like, whoa, how am I here? Why am I here? Why did I even choose Barnard in the first place? So I can say like on a micro level. Yes. And what I mean by on a micro level is that there are individuals at Barnard that I felt wholeheartedly had my back. Like they were in my corner, they were advocating for me structurally, no, there, I felt no support from Barnard. I mean, I already touched on the ASEP program and you know, how they structured that program. And to be quite honest, I never felt support from them, especially even after the program was over.

Speaker 2:

I mean, that program within itself was just stressed for absolutely no reason stress for absolutely no reason. Like making kids worry about grades when they should be worrying about enjoying their summer and transitioning into college. I mean, I understand where they're coming from in terms of like the academic preparation aspect, but it was way over done. It was way over done and with no type of how can I even say this with no type of empathy toward the students at all? It was a very strict, it was a very, you know, lay it on me, hard type of program. Um, so it, that honestly set the foundational layer for how I perceive Barnard going into Barnard. I obviously try to change my mindset on that through different avenues. I mean, there are people in the ResLife office when I became an RA, um, Laurie Diggs, for example, definitely in my corner, people that I would just speak to all the time, speak to all the time, unload my stress onto them, whether that be classes or whether that be the RA job, you know?

Speaker 2:

And I, and I felt like, okay, these are the people that we literally need to be having in these positions to actually say, like, these are what these students wants. Like these are people that are actually listening. Um, and not to say that I'm putting any individual blame on anyone. That's why I said versus a micro level versus like the institutional level in terms of like how Barnard structures, it's departments basically, you know, when you really get to see, you know, how much effort and how much time are put into departments more than others. Um, so that's one thing that I've realized. But if I were to answer the question just a whole, it would be pretty half and half. To be honest, there were times where I felt like no one is trying to reason with me. No one is understanding me. I mean, even as I was going through troubles, I feel like junior year soft, well, starting from sophomore year, but junior year, like junior fall was definitely my hardest, hardest semester at Barnard.

Speaker 2:

I could not even begin to explain like how hard that semester was for me. Like in a lot of things personally, academically, everything just encompassed in one and it just sucker punched me. Um, and that's when I began to realize like, wow, like here I am thinking, okay. Yeah, my school, you know, they have my back, but things like that, it didn't happen. I mean, unless I reached out in terms of like, okay, this is what's going on, which is fair. Like, yeah, let me reach out. That's fine. Um, but afterwards it's the follow-up that's afterwards where it's just like, Hmm, people are really not doing what they need to do. Um, and like I said, that's a structural thing. So I'm not sure if it's Barnard that actually needs to, you know, train professionals on how to manage students, how to better, you know, accommodate for students.

Speaker 2:

But it's very apparent. It's very apparent. And I hate that type of culture as well, because there's one thing I hate is a hypocrite school, um, a school that's like, you know, it's, I'm so serious, like a school that's saying, you know, we're here for you. There's these resources, there's this person, there's this person, but they're really not there. They're not, they're actually for the students. So it was very, very hard for me. It was very apparent my junior fall. Um, and after that I just moved accordingly. It's like, you know what, I have to do what I have to do for myself, for my mental health, for my physical health. And that's just that. So like I said, the people that I had in my corner, my family, my friends, and those individual people on a microscopic level, like they were definitely like championing me to keep going on, like type of like, you need to do this, you need to do X, Y, and Z. Like, it just needs to get done. Think about the afterwards where you're out of school, you know, you have your job and all that stuff. And unfortunately, things definitely didn't work out for me. Um, but yeah, it's definitely, I would say a split it's half and half in terms of like, whether I felt Barnard supported me enough. Okay.

Speaker 2:

So them saying, yes, we welcome FLI students. Like we're accepting. And, and Barnard just loves to pride themselves on numbers. Even our complication saying X amount of students identify as women of color, people of color, um, X amount of you did X, Y, and Z. They love to pride themselves on, on numbers. And I find that, you know, most liberal arts schools do, um, as a way to entice students of other backgrounds to come in. But let's be quite honest, Barnard, the university as a whole, it's very white, it's a very white institution. That's I don't feel like that's going to change for a long time, but what they can do is for students of color and for students that literally have multilayers of identities on them, whether that, whether that be first generation, whether that be low income, whether that be their background, whether that be where they come from from accommodate for that, don't try to lump us all into like, you know, one thing, or it's just like, we're going to treat all these students the same.

Speaker 2:

And I feel like that's where the disconnect that comes in, because even in classes, I mean, professors don't really take that into consideration. Everyone's sort of treated on this level playing field. And we all know it's not a level playing field. Like I already mentioned people come from more privileged backgrounds than others, even as I'm talking right now, I can acknowledge my privileged background that I come from someone else. So, you know, they need to take that into consideration. Um, and once they do that, that's the structural train that they actually need. Like, I feel like there's just been so many instances and where, especially in classrooms where it's just like, I am not the same as this girl. Like, we, we don't come from the same place. We didn't go to the same school. You don't have X, Y, and Z in common, whatever the case is, maybe don't treat me like this girl.

Speaker 2:

And that that's what you need to do. Um, I feel like that that's really where the disconnect comes in because it's, it's very unfortunate. And that's where you see their most vulnerable students struggling. And when, I mean struggling, I mean, struggling, if Barnard wants to do stats so much, go do the stats on how many FLI students are literally going with incompletes or whatever the case may be, struggling academically in their classes, struggling, struggling personally in the classes, struggling financially while also having the weight on them to finish their degree, like do a stat on that. Don't talk about how many students of color, I don't care. How many students of color are in your school, quite frankly, I, it doesn't mean anything to me at all. So while they love to throw numbers about, they really need to do calculations on that. Because if they're not seeing that there's clearly a disconnect there that's a problem.

Speaker 2:

That's a problem. We can take as many race and gender studies classes. We can take as many inequality and poverty classes, all these classes that sort of, you know, have the intersectionality between class, all of this stuff within New York city specifically, which is just jarring. Like we already know New York city, one of the, now actually the most segregated schools in terms of public schools, the most segregated, like the city itself. So being at Barnard, I don't know what feels like. I don't know what makes them feel like they're exempt from that or what makes them feel different from that. But no, there's a huge disconnect. It bothers me a lot. It bothers me a lot because when I'm seeing these students reach out for help, whether it be through, you know, platforms, Instagram, Facebook, and I'm reading this stuff, and I'm just like, this is a problem.

Speaker 2:

Like this is actually a problem. And administration needs to see this. There has been so many instances like where I'm just like, this can't be the school that I go to. Like, it just can't be. And thinking about it, even when I graduate from this institution, what sense of belonging do I actually say, oh my gosh, yes, Barnard. Like this happened to me here. Like, I feel such a sense of pride going into the school. I'm going to motivate, you know, kid-- younger kids, my, well, my age coming into the school. Yeah, come on into Barnard. Like, it's great. Everything's going to happen. And I mean, not to say that it has to be picture perfect, but at least try at least make the attempt, at least make the effort because that's, when you see your alumni, your alumni, whatever the case may be. They're not engaging with the school. They don't want to engage with the school because they didn't have never had support in the school. So it's very telling, um, that Barnard, in some cases they are hypocrites. They are hypocrites. Yes, they are.

Speaker 3:

My parents I've seen them hard, hardworking. They have been, they come to this country with so little, without even speaking one sentence of English and they have done multiple odd jobs to run the family and have worked hours and hours, seven days a week. And I've seen that and I've seen resilience and optimism from them. So that really keeps me going, pushing hard so that I can give a good life to them. And also I've seen also in the last four years, so many people have invested in me, the kind of mentors I've received and giving back to the community so that I'm in a position like that, where I can give back to the community, even on campus. I have been a mentor for step students. I've done a lot of fundraising through my clubs. So I felt like after I finished college and I'm like financially stable, and I have the resources that I have gained in the last four years, you know, we, I can give back to the community and the people who need help in a way. So yeah, giving back to the community and taking care of my parents are the two things that motivates me everyday

Speaker 1:

Is probably like, kind of like my community as well as knowing how important like education has really like enabled me to grow in like a lot of areas and get like, to a lot of places that I never thought I could like back in middle school, like, cause I grew up in like lower east side Manhattan. Like a lot of people would probably know that it's a very, although it's being gentrified right now, like growing up, like at least people in my middle school, like, cause I'm an middle school was like heavily defunded. So like a lot of people who did graduate to my, from my middle school, a lot of them now they either like already dropped out back in high school or like never attended college. So like just seeing, like making it this far, like to attend college, like, and how like getting that college degree can really benefit me, whether it's, um, pursuing internships at like big corporations or institutions that I wouldn't even have fathom or

even thought of like before attending college, as well as how a lot of people don't have the same opportunities to even like afford college.

Speaker 1:

Like that really pushes me

Speaker 2:

If I'm to be quite honest, like it's really my family that keeps me going. Like, I don't even want to tear up on this video, but I can't express how much support that I've gotten from my family that they actually need to see me, you know, walk across that stage, whether it be physical or virtual doesn't matter. It has to be for them. Um, everything that I've ever done in my life. It's, it's always been for them specifically. My mom, she has just been such a pioneer in my life. Always pushing me to do my best no matter what, no matter what. So my family is definitely some, you know, the entity where I'm just like, I don't care what happens to me at what cost it may take. You know, it's wrong for me to admit that, you know, sacrificing mental health, physical health, it has to get done.

Speaker 2:

It just has to get done. Um, and I know that that might not be the case for some people where it's just like, you know what, I'm tired. I give up. But every day I push myself, I wake up, I'm like zoom class. Like you have to keep going. You have to keep going. You have to keep going. It's just, it's not going to end here. Um, so yeah, my family is definitely, you know, the entity and there's other factors that play into it as well. I do it for myself as well. I wanna, you know, be part of my accomplished because I want to be proud of the fact that, yeah, I'm not going to be, you know, an outlier in this game where it's like a statistics where it's like, okay, the same FLI students that I'm talking about, that go through this thing.

Speaker 2:

And don't even end up matriculating from these universities that, that honestly it pains me to see. So I'm like that. I can't, I can't do that. I have to see it out for myself. Um, that motivated me in terms of recruiting season. Even I told you, I'm an econ major, I'm going into business, going into finance. It motivated me to be like, okay, this is, this is blowing my mind in terms of, you know, the amount of super days, the higher views, all of this stuff, but it has to get done because at the end of the day, I need to matriculate. I need to transition into my job and that needs to be that. And whatever else is in store for me, how I deal with then, but in the now it's just like, it has to get done for myself as get done for my family, for the people that are in my corner that literally want to see me strive and do my best. So no matter what Barnard has put me through professors, students, faculty, whatever the case may be. I, it has to be done. I'm I'm going to get out of this school. How does it I'm like, oh, I'm in jail right now. Like I have to leave, but I'm just saying in terms of, I have to see it through, I have to see it through, I entered here in 2017 and I had to do my four years and it just has to get done

Speaker 1:

Something that I want my peers to know about me or like the Asian American community in general is like, there's like this stereotype where like Asian Americans are like automatically from wealthy families. Because a lot of people like when they, me, you know, when I first joined, like pre-loss society, my freshman year on campus, like a lot of people saw me and like the way I speak and stuff like that, they never assume like I was like a low-income or first gen. A lot of them assume like my parents were very, um, like, how do you say it? Like intellectuals, like very educated when to like, you know, the typical like

stereotype where like doctors, lawyers, because like Asian, but like surprisingly, like when they later find out, like my parents are like my mother, she never even like, was able to finish like middle school. And my father, he graduated top of his class in high school, but he was never able to like attend college because he couldn't afford it. But, um, so they're like the typical like immigrant working class and

Speaker 2:

Say is, you know, get to know me first. And this is talking in terms of academic peers, in terms of people that I see in my classroom, people that I see on my zoom screen, they tend to make assumptions about people without ever knowing them. I mean, everyone, it's human nature to judge a bond appearance upon first sight. But then after that, we have to, you sort of remove those biases and, you know, really get to know someone for who they are, even if that's in an academic setting, even that even if that's in splitting up into a breakout room or anything like that. Um, so yeah, to my academic peers, I would just be like, be more receptive to people, get to know people first don't pass judgments on people. Cause I I've seen that a lot. Not only within our new online setting, but in the classroom setting a lot, people love to correct people. People love to make, you know, feel as though they're superior in some way, shape or form because of different identities, facets that they hold to themselves. That's wrong. You get to know people, you would be shocked, you'd be surprised. Um, so yeah, that, that's one thing that I will say without even delving into too much of my experiences with that. But yeah, that that's advice I would give anyone actually just don't judge, don't judge a book by its cover. It's a, it's a very cliché saying, but it really rings true in every situation.

Speaker 3:

I'm very people I'm very extroverted and like I'm very out there, but actually I'm very shy and I have a very difficult time, like sometimes expressing my problems or sharing what's going on with my life. Like I'm someone who's always out there for my friends, but when it comes to me, I'm very shy and I'm very introverted in a way. I don't think if people get that really because I'm always very talkative and things like that. And also I remember in my summer I used to dress up all the time. And so people used to think like I'm very blink are very out there, but I don't think I am like that. But I just like tried to dress up a little bit or maybe put a little bit dark lipstick, but sometimes people think, oh, I'm maybe a little bit bling. I don't know.

Speaker 3:

You know, as women, sometimes when women wear a little bit makeup or they do their hair, sometimes they're seen as old, not that important or maybe not that smart even I hear AOC always mentioning that. Especially women of color they're not taken seriously. So, and I have been instances like that with my red lipstick. People didn't pay much attention for instance, in a math class or in a math competition. People be like, oh, we don't have to worry about her. You know, that attitude, um, I've been there. Yeah. As women, as women of color really face all these things, constant sexism everywhere around us. So nothing new,

Speaker 1:

Don't be afraid to like speak your own truth. But also, um, always seek out like resources. I felt like when I was a freshman, I definitely like was too scared to like, um, kind of like ask for certain things, like ask for extensions or like ask the professor if you can't afford textbook, if there was like other viable options. Um, and there's always other like FLI students who might be like too scared to like out themselves as being willing to come in first gen. So fostering a community on campus will not only like help you get like

a support group that you didn't even know you needed, but it also like impact others because you're, you know, helping them fight for the resources that you need, but also other people need, but are probably too scared to buy for

Speaker 3:

Again, I say if there were some difficult moments in my family. Um, so asking for extension, which I finally learned in my junior year, I think that was the first time I did. So maybe ask for an extension or maybe like I had didn't have the best exam. And I went to the professor and I was like, this is what's going on in my life. Whether financially or socially, and I'm having a hard time. Is there a little bit extension I can get? Or maybe is there a way I can retake the exam? There have been instances that I have used. And I felt like, yes, there are plenty of good people who understand what's going on. Even if they didn't have the same circumstances are bringing, they do understand it's difficult to be in our shoes. Um, yeah. I feel like, yeah, for extension retaking my exam, maybe that's the highest I've gone through.

Speaker 3:

Uh, so things like that. Yeah. Once he got for help, don't be shy. Um, of course it's hard to navigate an environment. Like what are the Columbia finding the right group of people and mentor is difficult, but there are plenty of good people. I know who want you to succeed, who want you to invest on you and wants you to be happy. And I'm glad I found those people along my journey. So be out there and ask for help. There are plenty of people out there. And secondly, talk overworked, overstressed yourself. Yes. It's hard. Things will be tough, but you don't have to get an A in every class. And that's okay. Because I was like that my first semester I, when I called BS, I was like, that's the end of the world? Because in college, you know, we have the mentality. We have high school, like, oh, we always have to get A's.

Speaker 3:

We need to get a good college. So I had the same mentality and I used to open work so much. I wouldn't, I wouldn't sleep. I would work during the weekends. I would have no kind of social life. I feel like take it easy, enjoy the journey. Um, if you have even little like me getting internships, doing well in exam, pat yourself on the back, that's a lot. Considering the circumstances we go through, give yourself a little break and appreciate the journey. And don't always leave in the future because I've always been like that. Oh, how can I get a good job? Even my first year? I'm like, how can I go to get a good job? No, take every, step-by-step enjoy the journey and learn from the journey. Um, and things will fall into place. As long as you work hard, you meet the right people. And you're honest with your work. Take it easy. That would be my advice. This

Speaker 2:

Is going to sound really cliché, but it would really be live your life. Like live your life, no joke, whatever. It may be, whatever you're stressed about a paper, friends, whatever the case may be like, live your life for yourself. Like things are going to seem though as the most biggest situations in the moment, but they become so minuscule after. And I never want to say years after they become so minuscule two weeks days after, because of the nature of how college is, you don't even have time to ponder on, oh, I failed this quiz or I fell out with this person because things come at you so quickly that you're like, oh, well that happened. Have to get back to what I'm doing. So it's just like, you, you, you really end up wondering like, what's going on? Like, what's going live your life.

Speaker 2:

Like if you live your best life, but honestly, that's my advice live your best life. There's really nothing else to it. Because one thing I did realize is that if you really give yourself to one thing, whatever, that case may be, academic, personal, social work, whatever the case may be, you honestly find yourself, end up regretting something like that. Just giving wholeheartedly yourself to one thing, one cause, and I feel like this is advice for, you know, people that can be receptive to it because circumstances do cause for people to be like, I have to focus on this and that's just that, and that's fine. Um, but even if it's small things, small pleasures that you enjoy indulge in them, do them, you're going to want to do them. You're going to look back and be like, why didn't I? And that's, I feel like that's why I have like no regrets within my college experience, despite everything that has happened to me.

Speaker 2:

So I'm just like, no matter what I said far too, how I literally wake up and I'm like, this happened to me. Oh, well things happen. And then onto the next, like, I can't ponder on things for too long, as much as I would like to sit and salt and do all these things, I try not to, I try to adapt and just, you know, move on with my life. So yeah, that would be my advice. Live your best life. You really only have one college experience, it's your four years, you know, you're here, you made it, do it. And that's that.