

Speaker 1:

Hello, my friend, I hope you, and your loved ones are doing well. Welcome back to part three of five of a fly story, Barnard and Columbia edition. So, you know, we've gone through episodes one and two, right where we're in the deep end and we are learning more and more about what a fly student is. At least in our context, what that experience is like. And I want to peel some more, I want to date, I want to poke. I want to go deeper because that's just something I want to do. And when considering a fly story, I think the biggest thing, or one of the most prominent things that come up is this whole idea around balance. And I guess my question to you is how often did you consider yourself at equilibrium or juggling or having to like balance a bunch of different things? Let's start with that.

Speaker 2:

Um, I think I was definitely more out of balance when I came in to school and then now I'm going, like reaching my senior year. I think I'm more imbalanced, but I'm still like, not completely, I guess I didn't feel like I necessarily fit in my first year. Like I said earlier, like I didn't find my community yet. I came in as like pre-med and like, I drilled it down that like, I need it to make my parents happy. And like, that was the only way I can make them happy by doing something that they wanted me to do professionally longterm, that like would bring honor to our family. Right. And like, I just struggled so much because I hadn't ever taken an AP course in sciences at all. And then like a whole bunch of these students had gone to like private boarding schools and they were like severely like prepped to be in the setting where like professors, or like on the very first day, I didn't even know that we had homework to do beforehand.

Speaker 2:

Like do the reading. And it was me showing up like lined up like 10 minutes before class. And my friend was like, not like a classmate was like, yeah, have you done the reading? And I was like, what, what reading? Like isn't today, the day we go over the syllabus, like this doesn't make sense, but then over time, like I got used to it. And then I realized that like I had to actually go to therapy to realize that pre-med wasn't for me. And like kind of take away, like stop being burdened by my mom's projection of her dream onto me. Like, she was a great student at school, but she had to drop out so that she could support her family, like financially. Right. So like, it was me carrying on this burden from her because I had opportunities that she didn't have. And so I had to fulfill it for her.

Speaker 2:

And then like junior year, I think, after having let go of that, that expectation, I struggled with telling my family that. And then, but then also being okay with like my happiness and being like, my happiness comes over, like their expectations and then getting better at academics. Cause I like, cause I was really great at academics in high school, coming to school here and not being the best. It kind of hit my ego and like I was putting myself down. Cause that's how, that's how my parents valued me. Like that was how they were like, you're doing great at school. So you're amazing. Right. You're like the perfect kid, except in other other ways like anyway, um, and then here I am in college making it, like making my dream come true. And yet I'm failing at it. Somehow. I remember just passed this summer.

Speaker 2:

My parents, like there were just, we were in a fight and my parents were like, it doesn't make sense how you didn't get a hang of it really fast, like hang ups, college really fast. They were like, if you put enough effort in, fine with it. And, and being like pointing to stories about how like people are geniuses and stuff and like equally like comparing me to it and asking me what went wrong. So I guess in that sense, I

found the balance in like keeping out my parents like judgment off me and like their expectations and their burdens that were projected onto me while also yet knowing them to like push me and motivate me because of the sacrifices they made like me saying that like, yeah, they did, they have good motivation behind those words, but those words necessarily shouldn't directly affect me. Like they're not, they're not thinking through it, I guess. Yeah.

Speaker 3:

There's a lot to unpack here. And I think this narrative really sets the precedent for what's to come in this episode. And then also in further episodes where there are points of contention when you are trying to balance all these different things. At the same time, we do a really, really good job of it sometimes. And I want to keep that in mind. I want to keep that in mind. I do want to hone in and zoom in of course, into what makes a student here, a student and that's the classroom. And I guess my question is what is your experience been like being in the classroom settings?

Speaker 2:

I think a fear I had was just not knowing enough or like not being well-read or just, I had this like assumption that I was not prepared for this institution. Therefore I was not prepared for any of these discussions we're having, because I did not read some theorists, um, like everyone else did. And I really, you know, like I really couldn't in that moment understand that like it's okay to not know everything and not read everything and still have a perspective that's insightful and a perspective from my identity can in some ways, just be enough to add to a conversation. I think a big fear of mine was just like being looked upon as not belonging. And I think like, like I think people can't look at me and identify me as fly, but I think knowing that I hold that identity, like amplified how it felt, you know?

Speaker 2:

And I think like it, it made me feel like that's all that I was and that's all I can offer in this space and which is like, not completely true, you know? And I think like, since like it was so central to like my identity or at least I felt like it was so central to my identity at that time. It really felt like everybody else felt that way too. And like that like constant, like, well, they're gonna think that I don't belong here because that's kind of the narrative that has been like, told to me and like me messing up will in some ways reinforce that narrative, you know? So I feel like it did, I didn't allow myself to make mistakes because I felt like I couldn't make mistakes as a fly student because I felt like there was this preconceived notion that I already don't belong here. So I can't mess up. Cause as soon as I mess up, you know, in my mind, it's like, well now they know I actually don't belong here. So yeah,

Speaker 4:

I would say that. I mean, I've always had a pretty high self image and I always felt confident about myself. I would just say that my academic voice was never as confident being in the academic setting. I have so many stories. I have so many stories. My first semester I took this class called first year writing. And then of course there was a workshop element to it. And I remember writing an essay when I got my paper back, my teacher didn't even grade it do pull me to the side and she said, Hey, we don't even know how to write an essay. So you said that the way how you write a thesis is not how you write a thesis, the way how you do that analysis is not how you do the analysis. Um, and I remember just going home well to my dorm and just crying.

Speaker 4:

And I think that that's part of being FLI is lacking the resources, you know, that you need to be able to be in that quote unquote prestigious environment and thrive in an academic setting. I remember being in class and raising my hand and, and participating in the beginning, I would participate. And then students wouldn't really, um, react or comment on what I said or the teacher would kind of dismiss it. I've been in class with house. I don't know if she, if she's ever experienced that too, but the teacher would kind of dismiss it like, Oh, okay, good answer. Good answer. And then someone else would say the exact same thing, but just add a couple of sat words or make it sound more, um, sexy. And then, you know, they would get the glory. Right. And they would say, wow, you know, that's great. Like good that you said that and, and stuff like that. So yeah, I would say my academic voice is the biggest thing that I had to overcome.

Speaker 5:

How was it some professors? Um, actually the second semester professors, um, they were, I mean then again, they're also grad students or post post-presidency. I mean, they're also professors, but you know, like if we're talking about like actual professors, you know, who have like the chairs of the departments and stuff, um, they tried really hard to open up narratives and conversations with this. I think they really tried like humanizing our own narratives and our own experiences, but at the same time, it wasn't the sort of the sort of like, you know, I'm here for you. Like it, it was just like, there were not walking the talk, they were just talking. Um, and you know, it's like, I, it was just a really weird feeling when I went to some of my classes and I really wanted to, you know, talk to some of these professors and just want to just say like, Hey, you know, I'm just really interested in taking your class or, you know, you know, for the professors, um, whose classes I was taking at that time, just even like trying to have this sort of like open dialogue with them, the initial open dialogue, there was a sort of like gatekeeping those hops.

Speaker 5:

And it was like, whether you're not, if you are like worth talking to, and the only way that they saw like something in me was whenever I was like, I had to expose myself, I have to expose myself. I was like, you know, Hey, I'm a student, Hey, I'm a Muslim. Hey, you know, I'm this, you know, Hey, I'm a traumatized child. You know, because I started happened to me. It always was a, some sort of like transaction that had to make with them. There was this professor whose class I was taking it and it was for a seminar, actually, a grad seminar. And I just sat there. I was like, you know, I, I don't know any, this sort of language. I do not know how to write like this. You know, I, I feel very uncomfortable speaking the surf Manor because it reminds me of the English harshness that I had to take in high school where I was being criticized, because I didn't know how to write properly that my surf like dexterity of English is not enough.

Speaker 5:

It's not enough to, you know, to be some like an eloquent student to not be sound. I was like, uh, you know, like, you know, all disruptive applications and sort of like, like identity, like pushes to you. It's like, I get it. Columbia's awesome. You want to like create all the scholars? These were politicians, lawyers, doctors, yada, yada, yada. But like, I dunno, it, it really kind of gets me because I Rochester, you know, the professors, they, they truly tried to open up a conversation. Even the classes that involve like PhD students, seniors, juniors, freshmen, and sophomores, like the conversation was collective. It wasn't like, okay, I know I've majored in this sort of thing. I have learned French from, we started spewing gal, French and Spanish, or any sort of like very elitist, like theoreticals or frameworks to you. You know, it was, you know, it was, it was like, it's very slow.

Speaker 5:

The process, like it hurt, this is what this, this is like how Tony Morrison taught the sort of framework. This is how a cops gun is being used and sort of literature. It was never being thrown at you. It was being immersed into you. It's like, you know, I'm going to make you a meal. This is these instructions of how you Indian your, because if you never encountered that sort of, um, cultural cuisine before, like you don't want to disrespect the way how the sort of, you know, the food has been in. So you're given instructions, but you're also are being taught at the same time, because you're also giving like an instructions, a written form of, of like instruction and, um, learning, but also a visual form of instruction and learning. So you are being immersed into the experience at Columbia. There was nothing like that.

Speaker 5:

Um, for some of my classes for my second semester, yes. I would say that I, it was, it was pretty awesome too. Like for all my professors, when I was having a rough time, just why my anxiety was like, really like off the charts or, you know, when I have somebody who passed away from, um, COVID on somewhere close to home, you know, these professors like did the, the sort of like experiencing the vibes I was getting from my Rogers professors, those professors for my second semester classes, I was getting the same thing. It's like, that's how I was able to kind of like, kind of change the narrative, but it wasn't the narrative of Columbia at large. It was just about my professors, because even now I do have some professors who are incredibly awesome, like phenomenal, and they truly care for their sins, but then it also has some professors and some instructors who just, they're just like, you know, yeah, we get it.

Speaker 5:

It's, COVID, we're all online, but I don't care what's happening in our household. Like there's some departments that are like, you should have three absences. You're going to get a great reduction. We just kind of like ridiculous. Like, I'm sorry, if you want your students to majoring in places, if she wants students to come to you to these sort of, you know, very outstanding, um, like departments, you know, with like phenomenal instructors and, um, like pedagogies and all the beautiful cultivation that Columbia is known for to begin with. Why are you pushing this into way when they really want to learn this stuff when they really want to undertake those sort of majors. So for me, I'm still struggling with that at the moment.

Speaker 3:

Something that stood out to me was this idea behind a transaction that needs to happen where my trauma is transacted for your time and your resources. And based on, I mean, that's one thing that I pulled away, but I'm wondering then when is it the right time to pull the quote onto quote, fly card? Do you even consider our experience or anything of the light to be something that you pull a card for?

Speaker 5:

Not necessarily. I feel like when you pull those cards, I feel like at least for professors, they don't really care. Like either they think like, they're like, they pity you. And they're like, like, if you say, like, for example, like my first year I can automate a lot of people in my economics class took AP economics right before going in. And I felt like I was in like a disadvantage, but I felt like when I, I didn't tell my professor, like I was a lawyer comes in, but I was like, Oh, my high school didn't have AP econ. And he kind of looked at me and he was like, he didn't say it, but his face kind of gave me the expression. Like, Aw, like, that's why you got, I also hear from like my other friends, like when they tell the professors, like they're

a low-income student or they're in like the opera or the opportunity program, the professor like kind of discriminates against them.

Speaker 5:

And they just see like, affirmative action, if that makes sense. Like, they're like, Oh, you're not supposed to be here because you actually don't qualify. Like they give the students, like at least that attitude or that perspective from them. And I feel like that does touch upon like politics and stuff like that. And, um, but I feel like the financial issue, it didn't really, how do I say, like, I never liked told that part. I don't really pull my slide card unless like it's an extra curriculars, if that makes sense. Because in extracurriculars, like if I'm advocating for flight students, obviously I'm going to pull my card because I'm speaking from the actual, like fly student's perspective and not just like, Hey, I heard this person say this. So that's what I think SLI students want. Cause like I'm a fly students, so I know what fly students want. You know what I mean? Um, but in terms of like academics where like when I pull like financial or academic fly part, that actually never happened because I kind of tell myself, like, that's not an excuse, but there are some times where I can't afford the textbook. Like if it's like \$200 and I know my book voucher doesn't like cover it, but I felt like I should've told the professor like, Hey, I can't afford it. If that makes sense, because the professor just thinks like, Oh, you just don't want to read the textbook.

Speaker 6:

I think I talk about it a lot now, especially my clubs because I'm in some leadership positions and I almost always make that a huge part of what I want to be for the team and what I think the team should be aware of. Because in a lot of my groups that I'm in, um, I'm like one of the only low income students. And that's really evident, especially in a club sense where we're like traveling and things like that. I mean, the school covers like art costs for flights, but even like buying dinner out, like it's not feasible for me. So just like being active about that and like telling my story in a way that hopefully will be productive. Um, but I don't know if that's really a, a card. I think I pull it sometimes for my professors, but I think it's, I've been trying to be gentle on myself and tell myself that that's okay because it is my reality.

Speaker 6:

It's my, like, if I need an extension because I've been working multiple jobs and like also figuring out where I'm going to be living, because my living situation isn't stable. Cause my parents don't have a place for me right now. Like then so be it like, that's the honest truth, but it does feel sometimes when it, I use it more than once I'm like, Oh, like you think by this point I'm 19. Like, and then living in this identity my whole 19 years, you think I'd be able to get a grip, but I'm like, um, but yeah, and I think I use it. I don't use it per se, but I, it, it helps explain a lot of things about me that I would have blamed on myself until like I learned more about how being fly can affect you in so many different ways and the way you grew up, which affects who you are, like personality wise and yeah, the same how, like coming to realize like my biracial reality, really how that really affected who I am and my personality for a long, long time.

Speaker 6:

And instead of like blaming myself for being like shy to take up space, I was in a really white school, um, instead of blaming myself and be like, why am I so shy? I could be like, okay, it makes sense. I didn't want to, I didn't want to take up a dentist base because I didn't want it. People didn't want me to take up that much space. So it's like, I don't know. Interesting to think about, I think that in a lot of cases, like

you do have to use that, um, identity as just like something that you bring forward, because how can you justify, like, for example, if like, did I take an art class and I need to buy \$300 worth of art supplies? Like I honestly, I like don't have that money to like be doing it, but like I want to do it.

Speaker 6:

And in certain points of your life, you do have to advocate for yourself. And it's, I think it's more about advocacy and speaking up and being humble and sharing your story. But at the same time it could be really invasive and just like, why do I have to share my whole story to you? Like, why can't you just believe me? Like, it's like, there's good and bad to it. I've been on both sides where like, I'm like, I literally cannot pay this medical bill because this is just like insane. Like, and so like, I reach out to like Barnard and I'm like, can you guys help me out? And then sometimes they're like, yeah, sometimes they're like, no, but in either case is so it's just best to reach out. It could be a saving grace, but in regards to like them being like, Oh, you have to share more about your story.

Speaker 6:

Like you have to write this, this and that. I'm like, for example, when Barnard was doing like the housing things like accepting applications, like I literally, I could not get myself to write the, just like the personal statement because there was just a lot. And like, I mean, it's, it's a lot that I still I'm still trying to work on for myself, but it's also a lot that like, I'm just not comfortable sharing because I didn't know who was going to be reading it. And even if I knew who was reading it, I'm just not comfortable with that person because now it's on record now what's on, on the files. Like whatever, like I chose to share, um, like anyone could like see it, like what if they're like hacked and then somebody opens it and like, you know, literally could be anything, but I don't know why they, like, it feels like a pattern over and over where they're always asking us to do this. And I wish that there was some way that we could stop that. But I don't know. I honestly, I don't know. That's the aspect of the identity where I'm like, it really sucks. Like you really have to be so open and you have share so much,

Speaker 7:

So many details and sometimes they literally, they just don't care. And it hurts. Like when you feel invalidated,

Speaker 2:

If you're being welcomed into a school and I'm being sarcastic when I use the word welcome. And in your acceptance, they're saying, we recognize that, um, your, your family cannot pay. And I, I still have my barn and acceptance and anytime like I'm feeling down or I feel like I don't belong here, I would actually take it out and read it because it recognizes you cannot pay your estimated family contribution to zero. And I'm just like, okay, thank you. But yet, like they, and I, and I know that like, to be low income, you are more likely to not complete college because there are just certain factors that make it a little bit more difficult for you to continue on with your college experience. And in accepting students, especially in programs like the opportunities programs at Barnard, you're recognizing those factors and barn Barnard is recognizing those factors.

Speaker 2:

And they're saying, we want to help support you. We want to recognize that there's a lack of diversity at this school, or there's a lack of diversity in higher education. Um, and we want to fill that gap in some way. And this is a part of filling that gap is providing support to students of color, to provide support for,

um, low income students versus providing support for students who are the first in their family to attend college. I get a little frustrated sometimes when they ask us to fill out those forms, just because like, I mean, you know, that we're like, we're a Pell grant recipients, you know, this and that. Like, why is it that I have to constantly divulge traumatic instances in my family's history for you to fulfill your obligation to me? And I think that's the most frustrating part. And I look at it as something on their end, a shortcoming on their end, because there truly are schools that just a lot resources to students who are low income and you would apply for those resources, but you wouldn't really apply.

Speaker 2:

You're just saying a formerly, hi, this is what I need from you because I am a part of this program and that's it. And I think that's a very different approach, which I think, I guess Barnard is trying to take what access Barnard. I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt. But like, I there's, there's just only so much room to give. So yeah, I, I never even look at it as we're taking from the school. Cause truly like, if they didn't want us to come here, then they should not have accepted low-income students. They should have been in a week a need aware institution and I could have taken my right. To a CUNY. Let's be clear.

Speaker 1:

What's being brought up here, I think is a question of, or a question that could be directed to admin right now, at least that's what I'm hearing. So I wonder then what are some ways in which admin or the powers beyond us as students has like affected your experience and maybe even what are some suggestions, right.

Speaker 5:

Yeah. Just like last year when I was working in, um, as VP finance, obviously I have a lot more control regarding like pump finances. And I have that connection where I was meeting regularly with the CEO and stuff like that, which is chief operating officer. So he's in charge of finances. And I noticed like certain times I would tell them, they're like, Oh yeah, I want to hear like student feedback. Please tell me. So I would tell them the student feedback of what students want and they will be kind of like making excuses saying like, Oh, are you sure? Because, um, from our perspective, it's actually like this, but I think like I, what I said was very logical because later on, like they were speechless by the end of the meeting and the VP finance was like very like against what I was saying.

Speaker 5:

So she kept like, kind of like making excuses of why, like students shouldn't have the support that they needed. And at the end, like after I keep pushing back, I was like, no, like I understand where you're coming from. But the evidence shows that it's like this. And then at the end of the meeting, the CEO, um, the former CEO, um, I think his name was Robert. He was like, Oh, okay, we'll get those fixed. You know? So like you really need to hold those people accountable and also show like, okay, I agree with your side. But I also have true fat. That's now working effectively and you're going to save a lot more money in the long run because, um, and SGA meeting something very interesting is the school key saying that they're not getting enough alumni donations, but the truth is if you're not providing alumni with the things that you promised that you are going to provide us, like all the resources and stuff like that, if we're not happy during our undergraduate experience here, we're not going to donate money while we graduate. And statistics literally show that low income students who go to private school who

actually enjoy their experiences here and feel supported. They're more likely than like wealthier alumni to like donate more money to the school. If that makes sense.

Speaker 1:

I I've been thinking about that a lot just because I think, especially when it comes to student advocacy, I do see a lot of students putting a lot of mental strain on themselves to just change the school, to like, do a lot of freely.

Speaker 5:

And I'm like, why? Like, why do we have to do it?

Speaker 1:

And it's like, really, like I had to literally to go to therapy because of this, like, and having other things too. But like, this is like definitely something like, I also talk about it therapy, cause it's traumatizing to go to a professor and like, totally get to dismiss about like their problematic behavior when you like stand up to them. Finally, because I think like also just standing up to them in the first place is difficult. And then once you do it, I think getting dismissed is like, it's heartbreaking. I feel like there's always going to be someone to fight the Sprite and like to try to improve the school. I pray that there's always going to be someone at least. And I don't think it's okay for us as individuals to overburden ourselves with it and like, try to like, I don't know. I guess like feeling we're the only ones who could do it and like, not feel like we can't take a step back cause like taking a step back from something is feel so, so great.

Speaker 1:

I've done it before. I'm like, wow, I'm never going back. And you know, it's like a really empowering feeling and I think it's okay to like say, it's like, you need a break and someone else could do it. Someone else could take the step up and speak up and like, you know, or maybe just like tell administrators and be like, this is your job at the end of the day. Like figure it out. So yeah, I guess like that's what I would say. I think it's like knowing that there's always going to be someone to fight this battle and not feel like us as individuals, isn't going to make like a damaging impact, you know, and like put that weight on my shoulders. Cause that's not fair to like any of us

Speaker 2:

It's been four years. Right. I definitely had a different picture for what Barnard would it be? Like? I'm not saying that like, I don't love the school. I think I, I do like, I'm not gonna say after I graduate, like I won't come back to see my peers or something, especially the community that I built here. But I think there were so many flaws of Barnard that I didn't see beforehand that I see now that like having been through it as a student, obviously I think it's the same for everyone because you see it as an outsider and you're like, everything that's thrown at you as just like positives, like, Oh, it went to New York city. It's like a great like historically women's college that things about like being progressive or something like that. And then you get here and you realize that like not, everything's just like perfect.

Speaker 2:

I don't want to say that Barnard didn't help me. There are so many like traumas that I had that I was carrying on for my childhood, by being an immigrant, by being like the oldest sister in the family, like so many things that I went through that Vannara, didn't help me like see in a different light and like help move on, like figure it out. Kind of be okay with myself, I guess. But there are also things where Barnard

traumatized me on, like, there are stories that I won't carry on from this that I'm just like, I will never forget. I was talking to my friend the other day about this. Like how, like there are things that I've never experienced before that I had to like come here to like experience and then leave. So like going forward, I don't think I'm going to, I'm not going ahead with this. I, I realized version that I came in with.

Speaker 3:

I want to say thank you once again for tuning in and listening to part three of five of a fly story. If you have any questions, comments, concerns, please feel free to email me eight.sweet.chats@gmail.com or you can DM me on Instagram at [tweet](#), CHADS follow along. Their story continues there. The audio portion is just one part of the entire project. And I'm looking forward to hearing more of where this journey is taking us in parts four and five. So stay tuned and I look forward to chatting with you later. Peace.