

Speaker 1:

Hello, my friend, I hope you, and your loved ones are doing well. Welcome to the part four of five of a fly story, Barnard and Columbia edition. This episode is going to be, uh, what I'd say a conglomerate, you know, we've we followed a very, not linear. I want to say linear narrative up until this point, but th the narrative has been growing, right? It's been growing compounding, at least I hope it is. And we've reached this point where we're at episode four and I kind of want to touch on multiple topics at the same time. And so that's what this episode is going to be about. Just a, a nice scatter of just thoughts and opinions and different vantage points. And I'm excited. So to start off that episode, because you know, we're college students, right? We live the college life. It's lavish, as some may say, maybe not, who knows. I do wonder though, what the social life on campus, having massive amounts of wealth be being presented to students like us for fly. What does that look like for you?

Speaker 2:

Despite, you know, noticing their awesomeness. There was this really weird, like unspoken communication of like wealth and privilege, like regardless of how are they identifying themselves, um, race, ethnicity, class, there was this sort of like privileged conversation that automatically like sounds shared the moment you walk into the class store. It's like when all the other students are sitting with Jim, [inaudible] like, you see, like, you know, some of them on my new things, you know, what bottle are they're holding, you know, the, the water bottle that they're getting from, like an Exiter or maybe they have a folder, or they're wearing a hoodie that's coming from Kuwait, or, you know, all this like elite, you know, whether they're private or public high schools, you know, you hear them kissing, that's their pride, you know, and they're, they're trying to extend their own pride into their space.

Speaker 2:

Maybe that's, you know, that's comfort zone, but that's sort of cumbersome for me is kind of like an intac and like, attack, like, you know, yeah, I'm here. I'm just going to stroll around and like, let you know that, you know, I kept from this space and you did it. And it sounds really, really bad because it's like in a ball, like, why do you think like that stopping a cynical person? Like just, you know, fix your mind. Like, don't, don't like, don't worry about that kind of stuff. But, you know, the sort of like vocabulary that they're using, like when these students were talking, I'm like sitting here, like, did they like study at Oxford or something? Like, I dunno, half the words that they're using and mind you, I'm a humanities person. So like, I would just love to, you know, use like, sort of like high theoretical tabulary and just like to go on and on and on with our theories. But like, when these students were just saying these words, I was just like, looking at them like, Oh, what? And then when the professor were just like struggling during French and lie and, and I'm like, I'm cool. I know, bum Jordan like that.

Speaker 2:

And then like, to, um, to end it's like, and the funny thing is that I felt more at home at Barnard with my Barnard friends.

Speaker 3:

I felt at home at Columbia

Speaker 2:

Because that one class went home. Um, it just exacerbated my anxiety. Like I kept thinking about like, Oh man, like I gotta wear like Burberry coat, you know, let me get someone like a venture story. You

know, maybe if it's fake or not, as long as like Burberry looking, like, let me look to that. No, adopting the surface side that basically would showcasing, you know, like I'm on their level as well. Like I kept feeling like I have to be on their certain level, but whenever I tried doing, like, when I tried like going through that sort of pathway, they always were going a couple steps ahead. And he, it was always like some sort of, kind of grease, like whether they're ahead or I'm ahead or I'm behind, or they're behind, you know, it's just, it was just very uncomfortable because it just really made those sets.

Speaker 2:

Like, why did I have to compete with these people about, you know, what they're doing? Like I know for a fact that I came to Columbia, you know, when I got the Columbia acceptance letter, when I was, um, like the last day before my last final at Rochester, I was screaming. I was like, yo, I made it. But like one Columbia, like when he put like name of first step at Columbia, I was like, um, I don't know who this wall is, but all the things this here, you don't know who Malala is. Uh it's, it's just a random Columbia sign. Just like, think of that person that's like that. So like the fact that IT-based my own self, I like uprooted my own foundation. Like that got to me second semester. I was like, no, well, you can't do those. Where is that blog that we knew at Rochester who was like making jokes with professors being Stassi and making remarks, you know, like with their professor, you know, like chime in, in their own opinions, um, or like outright, you know, calling out the sexist person in that sort of class, you know, like, where is that ball?

Speaker 2:

Where's the, where's that sort of like critical, but playful and carefree energy? Like what happened? Like why did Columbia get to that, to that point? And that it wasn't until when I started talking to some of my professors, I was like, you know, like, I really need to like, understand, like, why is this affecting me? And like, when it got to it, it was because I kept using my flight identity as a means of division and not as a means of affirmation. So it's quite weird to say to him to say that invoice that I, because I really embraced my identity, I Rochester, but the moment I stepped in, I just kept using that as like, no, you're not them. No, you can never, ever beat them. You know, these transfer students came from U Chicago, UCLA, USC, Dartmouth McGill. And you're like, yeah, you came from Rochester or you don't which literally institution, but, you know, it's really weird, like mental gymnastics that I don't know, I just did to myself.

Speaker 2:

And it, and honestly, like I kind of do have those kind of days where I really would have to like sit down and just breathe because, you know, when all the students are like, yeah, I always want to be poor. You know, let's go to the vintage shopping. And I know for a fact that some of these people have their parents or them themselves are making six figure salaries, you know, for my family, that's like, what six, seven, eight times the amount that they're making or compared to my family's income, like, you know, I I'm just feel like, you know, like great, you know, use mess and aesthetic, but you know, it I'm just going on a tangent. Sorry. But, but I, I I'm just at the point, is that the point is that, um, it, it really got to me psychologically. And although I did have like some mental days to just kind of understand what's happening. Um, I guess when I was trying to, I, what I was trying to say that with internal theoretical application, but it wasn't until when I started like looking at it from desert perspective that I kind of started re-embracing my flight.

Speaker 4:

Well, my first year, like, I think I watched too much like American movies, but people automatically just assume like, Oh, first year is like college parties and stuff like that. And that could just be because like academically it's really rigorous, but I feel like if I could go back, I would probably tell my first year, like, it's okay. If you don't get to experience the same exact things that your other Keiretsu do you experience, I like the school you do, for example, like my first year, I, cause I'm Asian, obviously. Um, a lot of like, you know, the stereotypical, like Asian peers who are actually from wealthy families, like they automatically assume like my parents are also very wealthy or like we grew up the same exact way. So they would like invite me to events that were like, you know, you ever watched that movie crazy rich Asians like that, like spending money like that.

Speaker 4:

And I was like, like, they think like, Oh, going to Chanel ball [inaudible] is like very normal, like shopping. That is like, they're forever 21 basically. And like, like I never told them like, Hey, I can't afford it. But I would like politely like decline. And I remember one of them offers was really angry at me because she thought that, Oh, I just didn't want to be her friend or something. Um, the, like the life later on, like, like after, like I kinda like added myself or took ownership of my identity, like she realized that she was wrong because she just assumed that everyone was the same lifetime financial status sector, if that makes sense.

Speaker 2:

And so those of the imposter syndrome, um, I mean,

Speaker 4:

That's a great way of really demonstrating different students accolades.

Speaker 5:

Um, I remember one time we had a, a freshman orientation and they were saying like, they were talking about this statistics, like 40% of your classes, divers, um, which is quite interesting. Um, and then they would say like, Oh, like someone in your class actually like made a non-profit or, you know, like they would just talk about different accolades. And I remember like, kind of feeling like, Whoa, like it's a dream of mine to one day build a nonprofit. And do you have students that have already done so right. You have students that have met big, uh, leaders, um, such as Malala Sensai, Michelle Obama. Um, I remember even hearing about a student who interviewed Michelle Obama or something like that. So, um, yeah, it definitely made me think like, Whoa, like these women, but I think that it all, it, it all comes down to perspective because for me, I love that.

Speaker 5:

I mean, there's the saying that if you are the best in the room, then you're in the wrong room. So for me, I mean, I just, I just got motivated in a sense and, and thought, wow, like, um, you know, I'm in an environment where, uh, you know, people are doing big things and, you know, I can be able to kind of live up to that. But I think at the same time, it all depends on which perspective you're coming from. I know it could also be in a negative way that you can feel that you don't belong. Right. Or you could feel like, um, you know, why am I here? Like I haven't done those things. Right. So, yeah, definitely

Speaker 1:

There is something to be said about being introduced to this level of wealth, whether it be intentional or unintentional, implicit or explicit in the accolades or in the ways in which people are doing fantastic things. And you're just sitting there like, Whoa, that's crazy. That's intense. How do I match? How do I get to there? And those are things that I think about, you know, putting in my own 2 cents really quickly simultaneously though, I think we should introduce into the conversation, the element of privilege and what that looks like. Not only for those that we see, but maybe even for ourselves. Right. How does that look?

Speaker 5:

Yeah. Who did that is very difficult. And I don't think I've had an, I haven't had many conversations on like the idea of privilege aligned with like fly, like how that works simultaneously. But what I will say is that I do believe for me as a young black woman who goes to Barnard college, I have been exposed to a world that has a lot of certain privileges in that. I don't

Speaker 4:

Think other people who may have come from a similar background to me grew up in my neighborhood, may be have my racial identification or my ethnic identification probably can't resonate with. Um, and I think that if we're talking about privilege, privilege definitely is a conversation of comparison and it's comparison based on like systemic things. And I don't think that my, the fact that my mother went to college is at all derived from the fact that I ended up at Barnard. So I think that her, on that stepping stone for herself gave me another stepping stone. And I think that is some type of privilege. I don't really know if that's true by like the technical definitions, but that's, that's how I feel. I don't, maybe there's another name for it that I'm not aware of, but that's what I'm gonna call it. And to like, just be able to casually say, yeah, if I don't get a job, I'm going to apply to grad school to casually, you're going to say I had access to the knowledge that lets me know the entire application system or like, I, somebody, I can find somebody to write my recommendation letters.

Speaker 4:

I have access to like helping someone, helping me find scholarships, like all of that stuff. I think, I think it's some type of privilege. So I think that, I don't know, it depends on like each fly student, but for this one, um, I think that I have been like allotted a set of privileges that, um, aided me in my discovery or like give me like God bench or like something like that, just in case I, you know, can't find a job or something.

Speaker 1:

I think that's a fair approach to tackle this question. I think it was not that it was an unfair question. It was just a question. That's like something that I had to take time to think about for myself. And I really wanted to also address here because I want people to also think about it right privilege. And what does that look like when you look at it from different lenses and you mentioned your mom a lot, which is very interesting to me because I always consider and think about my mom when I'm doing a lot of the things that I do on a day-to-day basis. And I'm trying to find motivation to do things. How are ways in which, and this of course applies to another narrative that is associated with a fly story, which is family dynamics and finding the space to do the things that you want to do at the same time, having the different responsibilities that come with being who you are, I guess, how have you been able to just juggle that?

Speaker 4:

Yeah. Okay. When you ask that question so much comes to mind, but, okay. So I'll start this, I, again, attached to this conversation of privilege and attached to like my understanding of how I ended up at Barnard is late to the fact that men, mother, like I have two, two younger siblings, I'm the oldest. So that within itself, for most people comes with a set of responsibilities that, that, um, puts them in a position where they have to become like a older sibling, sometimes almost a parent as well as themselves. And that's something that my mother didn't, she didn't put me in that position. Um, and I think it was because she had known what it was like to be in that position as like someone who has to like help her siblings and help herself and then like help the family. And I think it was hard for her, um, which is why she tried to detach that from me.

Speaker 4:

So I can just do me, um, and put everything that I can into my schooling. Um, and I think that very much crafted the experience that I ended up having as a student in high school, middle school and now in college as well. Um, so I've been very thankful for that. Um, and just the fact that when it does come to, you know, like school in general, like my mom has been there to like help me in whatever way she can. Like, for example, like if there was like a tuition balance due and like she could help me, like it was her responsibility first in her eyes. Um, she would do that and then if she couldn't like, I would have to do it. Um, and then I'm also thinking about work. So that's like the family aspect, the only time where that became extremely difficult is when I had to move back home in March.

Speaker 4:

Um, and that was when I was like, I cannot do this, like being home like itself, just like, I don't know if it was home or I don't know if it was the pandemic. I just feel like we should have all came to an end, a halt, like we should have all just stopped. Um, once that happened, because it was too much going on, like just being in a full household where like, there's not much space for me to like, be on my own terms and like do my work. There is no space for that made it difficult. Um, so, okay. That's that, that's like the family aspect. And then in terms of like, I think you kind of question the financial aspect too as well.

Speaker 4:

So, um, when I think about that, I think about how this is kind of like a personal story, but, and saw my mom moving in, I live in the Bronx. So like, it wasn't that big of a deal. There was like no crying, no huggy or anything like that. So she like dropped me off and then like, she like handed me like money 10 and be like, I dunno, like \$60 or something like that. And she was like, this is like, this is all I have to give you. And I was like, hold up. She like, she just me like the little to no money that she probably didn't have to give. And that was like, I don't know. It was just crazy that like, she handed me that and like I knew I had to make the most of it, but also thinking in like the grand scheme of things, how like, that really isn't a lot of money, especially like doing in-stock where everybody's like going out, like doing their own thing, like that money can literally be spent in like one city.

Speaker 4:

So I had, like, I kinda had a moment where I was like, I figure this out. Like I had to like have to start working now I have to like bring in whatever kinds of income that I could and I could have. So I guess as a result of that, like work became like a direct part of like my college experience as well, where I had to, you know, find a way to like, have an on-campus job babysit and then like do my schoolwork all at the same time. And then like also try to be a college student too. So that is also a part of like, like that's also

what makes it my experience, like knowing how to balance, like work school, me as a person, my social life. And then like still finding time to connect with like my family as well.

Speaker 1:

I want to say, let me give the mic to you, but that's kind of what I've been doing this entire time. Hopefully at least that's the intention. Metaphorically. Let me give the mic to you and ask what is it? I mean, if you were to be given a mic and stand in front of your entire class, what are some things you wish people knew about you, whether that be fly related or not?

Speaker 4:

I wish that people knew how much, like, it really sucks the fly when like you're like the oldest, because I feel like I always had a compromise, a lot of the things I wanted to do. For example, when I was in fourth grade, I wanted to play violin, but I never did it because I had to pay money. And so, um, it was just something that like, who knows where I would be if I had played violin, but it's like, I wish people would just know how much I students do have to compromise. Like I've compromised a lot in my life. And like, I feel like other people have to add, like, it's like a struggle and like, um, I don't know, like, there's just like, I could probably be like a different person or who knows, but I'm like, I'm happy with who I am and like what I like to do and what I've gotten the opportunity to do,

Speaker 1:

Should we fly sometimes is interesting to put it into layman's terms. I don't know any other way to describe it sometimes, but can you give me an example where let's say someone figured out that you were fly? How do they react?

Speaker 5:

I've always been curious about those things, um, to the point where my mom like, cause school around food around campus is just ridiculous, ridiculously expensive. And my, my mom, like freshman year had given me the EBT card to use every once in a while for groceries. And then to just give it back to her, um, when I'm done and I was at the checkout counter and this man saw the card and I had been using it for weeks at this point, like, and he was just like, Oh, that card, where did you get it from? What's the designer. I was like, I dunno what the designer is. But I was just like, what is, you've seen me often before, sir, this is just the first time you've seen me with this card. Why do you must, um, do this? And I felt so uncomfortable. And I was like, mom, you fit on the card back.

Speaker 5:

I don't need this. And I think that's like the first time I started going out of my way to like actually dress really well around that time. I think this was around my, yeah, this wasn't around my freshman year, just because I, I dunno, like I didn't want to be associated with being low-income, but at the same time, I don't know. It was, it was weird. It was weird. I didn't want to be associated with being low income. Um, cause I think that definitely affects people. How they treat you and how they perceive you. I, even when I first went to Barnard, I like got the impression. It was like, Oh, you poor things. Let me help you. Which is not how I see myself at all. And I was like, I don't, um, I mean, I still resonated with FGLI students and I'm going to keep from the company with them, but nobody needs to know that I'm FGLI they own, they don't know in terms of my fire identity.

Speaker 5:

I think it would be cool for them. I don't even care about them knowing about my fly identity. I just care about them asking about it. So if people, if people just ask more questions to create dialogue that gave me space to give my identity a name and give my identity my own perspective and shape it myself. Um, rather than them having a label to just be like, okay, this girl's fly. I don't want them to know that in fly. I want them to know that I'm more than just fly and wanting to ask the questions about my flight experience and my human experience with the like background of being fly and what that, what that is like. Um, I also just like, I feel dumb sometimes because I just don't have that social capital. And also just my personality is kind of like, so like people, I don't think the first thing they think when they meet me is like, she's intelligent.

Speaker 5:

I just don't. I think it's kind of like, Oh, she's chaos, which I don't mind at all. But I also would love if people kind of thought about who I was in a more comprehensive way that included my fly identity to help them understand that. Oh, that's why she didn't know why Columbia was in New York or like, maybe that's why, let me ask her about it then just rather than just assuming, or just like, instead of assuming that I'm just chaotic and like bubbly and like kind of all over the place, like being like, Oh, she has a lot on her plate, she's working two jobs and doing school and trying to make, like, I don't know. I just wish people knew me with more understanding. And I don't know if I want them to know anything about me in particular, but I just want in the way that they know me, I want that to be changed.

Speaker 6:

I don't even know if this is a stereotype, but like, it's like, we're a low-income and we have to work like jobs. And like, oftentimes like me, like myself included, like, like I would have like two, three, like gigs, you know, to survive. And I'm just here. Like, I'm just here like, well, wow. I am really the, that student. That's like, you know, working really hard in school and at work. And I have no time to myself. And I think like that can be seen as a stereotype, but it's also like a reality for some fly students. It's a reality for me, you know, like I don't have leisure time or as much leisure time as I want this week. And you know, like it can get to you when you're like thinking about things. You're like, well, if I only like didn't have to work this job, I could get this paper done and I can like get some sleep and I will be a happier, healthier human.

Speaker 6:

And like, I can just like do things that I think oftentimes like as college students, like it's like go to office hours, attend, attend this, like, you know, like talk all these like things where it's just like, I would love to do that, but it's like, I also feel like a heavy pressure to like also, you know, just make money to survive. I feel like it personally, like in some ways, like robs me of like an education, just like putting my time like elsewhere. Um, when I could fully put it into like school, but I think at the same time, like I've like come to learn that like, I'm still learning. I'm still existing. We're we're doing both and we're here. And that's also like a way of like doing college. Like it doesn't need to be. And I also stereotype of college is like people who are not fly students have all this free time to do all these things, you know?

Speaker 6:

And that might not be the case for everyone. Some, some students can have free time. All their students are packed, packing their time up with other things, you know? So I think like that's a stereotype that I sometimes struggle with. I think I'm different. Like you're like, at least for me, I feel like it's like, the pressure is emphasized. Like it's like emphasized, like I need this job or else, you know, like a lot of the

anxieties that I hope will like perpetuate my mind. Like for instance, like, I know you mentioned like or alluded to like, oftentimes if we're not successful and we're failing, um, how you can feel as if like the people around you cannot succeed as well. And I think like, I feel that as well, I feel like, well, if I'm not able to work and go to school and like do all these things, then like I'm not succeeding and it's not that linear, you know, it's not that linear.

Speaker 4:

I don't even know if I can agree with, I don't even, I'm not going to even call it hard. First of all, because I just think that that's like, that's, that's normal. Like that is it's what build care is, what builds character. And it's how you get through your day there. Once you become an adult and like you leave college for a lot of people who don't have the responsibility of like balancing all of those things, it's going to come up in their lives of like having to balance multiple things at some point. And I think luckily for a lot of FLI students who have to like balance all of these things, they build that character early. And I think I S well that, I think I literally saw my mother went from like sixth to 10th grade for me. I believe it was six to nine or something like that.

Speaker 4:

I saw my mother going to school. She wasn't working, she had two kids and we were still eating every day. So you mean to tell me that I, as a child, 17, living in a dorm with a dining plan everything's already paid for, and I have to do work if I want money is literally just for like, luckily, like my mom was able to like, handle like whatever bills like they had. So whatever I, whatever money I needed was like, just supplemental for me. And if I wanted to, like, I dunno, like get a birthday gift for like a family member or like help out what I can that's I had to do. So if I saw my mom do all of that and make sure she kept a roof over the head of two kids, um, herself, make sure we went fed, make sure I had everything I needed.

Speaker 4:

And then sometimes more, I was like, there's no way I can't like the \$60. I can't make that stretch until I find a job or something. Um, so that's exactly what I did and that's exactly why I don't really see it as hard. Um, just because like, it's been something that's normal to me and I'm not scared of having to like, make my own or having to work or having to like, you know, stand on my own two feet and get stuff done. Um, because that's like, that's the reality of life. So that's why I appreciate what you said at the very, very beginning of our conversation about transgressing, this idea that everything about, uh, FL FLI students experience is negative or that it's difficult, or that it's like, you know, like crawling out some hole and like realizing that life is so difficult all the time.

Speaker 4:

Um, I hate that narrative. Um, and I think that what I appreciate the most about this conversation and about this project is the fact that a part of the conversation of the difficulties that an FLI student must face is putting side-by-side the fact that our stories are also ones where like, we enjoy ourselves. Like we're, we're humans where every single aspect that might be seen as difficult or hard isn't necessarily hard because I mean, and honestly, I think that that perception is like born out of like the binaries that, you know, continue to like keep us like in those lower positions. So as long as we go on believing that we live in a world of no negative and good, I mean, negative and positive, good and bad, et cetera, et cetera, somebody will continue to be on that lower end of the stick. And like, I'm tired of that, you know? So over it. So thank you for this conversation. Thank you very much.

Speaker 1:

I mean, thank you very much. Honestly, I think this conversation and this journey that I'm taking us on, it's, it's been a roller coaster of ups and down side to sides and everything. One of the most prominent things that are coming to me, especially as we're wrapping up is there is no one narrative, right? Everyone who's under this identity, to some extent has a different take. There are similarities. Yes, simultaneously there are differences. What are those differences? How is it that we can just generalize an entire population under one category and assume that everyone's story is the same to this day. I am baffled by that idea, but I'm hoping that as you listen to more and more of these stories and more and more of these narratives, you can kind of gauge that that's a bit more nuanced because we, as people are a bit more nuanced than, um, what is initially told to us, anyhow, I'm going to wrap up here.

Speaker 1:

This was part four or five of a fly story. We have one more part to go. It's going to be a part to just end this off, tie the bow on the, not tie the bone or not tie the tie, the bow up on the package. No mind me, anyhow. Wrap it up basically is what I'm trying to get at. None of us, I'm excited for part five to come in and I'm so glad if you have been listening from part one to now, bless you are fantastic. You are the joy to my life. And please let me know that you're listening so I can like fond over you endlessly. I'm down to do that. If you have any questions, comments, concerns. Feel free to email me@eightsuitechatsatgmail.com follow along. Like I said, there's visual pieces, written pieces, et cetera, et cetera, that are going to be posted mostly on my Instagram and hopefully on a website that is to be determined and to be announced. But yes, thank you so much once again, and I will chat with you later. Peace.