

Interview with "Clark" on April 25, 2023

0:00:02.910,0:00:04.410
Good morning, Clark.

0:00:04.970,0:00:06.410
Good morning, Professor.

0:00:06.770,0:00:13.720
It's nice to have time to talk with you today. Today is Tuesday, April 25th.

0:00:13.980,0:00:19.910
Let me begin with a brief introduction about you and about the project.

0:00:20.470,0:00:26.820
Clark has chosen to use a pseudonym for this interview, and to keep his camera off.

0:00:27.430,0:00:29.730
Clark was born in 1987

0:00:29.860,0:00:36.700
and is originally from a small village in Chengdong Province, which is located in the east of China.

0:00:36.890,0:00:43.310
He speaks Mandarin Chinese and English. He is a first-generation college student

0:00:43.480,0:00:49.450
and the first time he left his hometown was when he went to college in Tianjin City.

0:00:49.760,0:00:56.670
Clark majored in engineering in college, and worked for an international company in the capital city of Beijing.

0:00:57.190,0:01:03.370
Then he moved to Beijing and worked in the Central Business District, realizing his childhood dream.

0:01:03.730,0:01:10.880
He moved to the United States in 2022, one year ago, and now lives with his wife in Rockville, Maryland.

0:01:11.240,0:01:26.050
Clark attended Montgomery College for one semester in the fall of 2022, and was my student, which I was very happy about. He was in ELAP, English Language for Academic Purposes. The ELAP program, in the capstone course.

0:01:26.380,0:01:37.930
Clark is now pursuing a master's degree in the United States. He is also working in the field of international business and in his spare time, he enjoys playing board games.

0:01:38.300,0:01:50.120
So thank you so much, Clark for taking the time to tell me your story. As you know, my name is Heather Bruce Satrom, and I teach in ELAP, English Language for Academic Purposes at Montgomery College.

0:01:50.400,0:02:04.810
This project is called History in the Making: Documenting Stories of Immigrant and Refugee Students at Montgomery College, and the goal is to help others better understand the experiences of immigrants in the United States

0:02:05.260,0:02:12.920
Telling your story will enable others to better understand the challenges the immigrants face in the United States

0:02:13.040,0:02:17.850
and better appreciate the resilience and perseverance of people in your community.

0:02:17.930,0:02:20.430
I am grateful for your participation.

0:02:20.690,0:02:36.160

You had a chance to read these questions in advance, but please note that all of the questions are optional. If you want to skip a question, just let me know, that's fine. If you need to take a break at any point, that's also fine, and we'll talk for about an hour today.

0:02:36.490,0:02:41.680

All right to begin, can you please tell me the pseudonym that you are using for this interview?

0:02:42.510,0:02:49.520

Clark. Clark great, do I have permission to record this interview?

0:02:49.570,0:02:58.000

Thank you, all right. So tell me, Clark, where and when were you born? How old are you, and tell me a little bit about the place where you were born?

0:02:58.280,0:03:05.310

Yeah, hi, everyone. I'm Clark, I'm so happy to be here to share

0:03:05.330,0:03:12.440

my story with you today. I was born in China as

0:03:12.600,0:03:20.950

Professor Satrom introduced. I was born in a small village in China. Now I am 35 years old.

0:03:21.090,0:03:22.400

And

0:03:24.490,0:03:33.480

Yeah. just your first question, right? Yeah, absolutely. And when you were growing up, who was in your family? Can you tell me a little bit about your family members?

0:03:33.860,0:03:50.980

Oh, I spent my time partially with my grandma, and partially with my parents because they were too busy to make money to, you know, support the the whole family financially.

0:03:50.980,0:03:57.780

So my grandma helped out for a while, for a couple of years.

0:03:58.380,0:04:04.710

Can you share any memories you have about your grandmother? Anything special that you want to share about your experience with her?

0:04:06.770,0:04:11.380

Yeah, yes, a long time ago, my grandmother

0:04:13.410,0:04:24.880

was a very nice grandma. I think she is the best grandma in this world. The most memorable thing was that

0:04:26.520,0:04:35.610

during the night, like we went out to meet with other villagers, and they

0:04:35.620,0:04:39.520

told me some, you know, like silly stories

0:04:39.630,0:04:42.760

and I was very interested in

0:04:42.990,0:04:47.010

I used to see ... in those stories. And

0:04:47.580,0:04:53.510

yeah, I remember those things. Yeah, many nights, you know, we spent together too.

0:04:53.570,0:04:54.610

I spent

0:04:55.120,0:05:06.880

time listening to the stories they told me. Yeah, I love that. So you would sit outside to listen to these stories? Yeah, I mean outside means on the streets.

0:05:07.120,0:05:10.460
Yeah. But in the village.

0:05:10.660,0:05:21.490
That's a nice memory. Can you tell me a little bit about the community that you grew up in? It's a small village. Was it agricultural? Can you describe it for us a little bit?

0:05:21.860,0:05:28.190
Oh, yeah, actually, it's a typical village in China.

0:05:28.570,0:05:39.050
This village has like 100 households, about like 300 villagers in it, and

0:05:39.300,0:05:51.580
it's like a small community, and every village is like detached from, It had two other villages, and

0:05:51.630,0:05:59.880
we did live together, and we had our farm in our village area, and

0:06:00.000,0:06:05.140
most villagers' jobs were farmers.

0:06:05.320,0:06:08.110
And some of them

0:06:08.520,0:06:12.550
you know, like with livestock

0:06:12.950,0:06:20.110
such as chicken, dogs or pigs, including my family.

0:06:21.170,0:06:24.580
So were your parents farmers? Was that their job?

0:06:26.990,0:06:28.960
They were part-time farmers

0:06:29.250,0:06:34.920
and they had a full-time time job in factories

0:06:35.310,0:06:42.590
Yeah. So, considering that they... were farmers part-time. So

0:06:42.880,0:06:50.160
I needed to help them to take care of our livestock.

0:06:50.640,0:07:00.970
Can you describe a little bit those responsibilities that you had when you were a child, in terms of taking care of the animals and helping your parents out on the farm?

0:07:01.250,0:07:02.770

0:07:03.200,0:07:11.180
Yeah, when I was a child, actually I didn't have the consciousness to be a,

0:07:11.300,0:07:22.490
you know, like a farmer, or to help them do anything. I just followed their command. I mean, we came back from school, and

0:07:22.580,0:07:27.680
the first thing I start to do is preparing

0:07:27.880,0:07:39.000
dinner for livestock like pigs, and then started to do my homework, waiting for my parents to come home, and

0:07:39.250,0:07:43.760
my mom, who cooked lunch, cooked dinner for me

0:07:43.780,0:07:50.910
and sometimes I went to our farm

0:07:50.980,0:07:56.790
I mean followed my parents and helped them

0:07:57.440,0:08:00.410
and I'd do some farm work.

0:08:00.590,0:08:02.620

0:08:03.810,0:08:11.980
You were and are an only child in your family. Was that typical at that time? Was that under the one-child policy?

0:08:12.640,0:08:26.430
Yeah, I'm the only son of my parents, and my mom once told me she got pregnant. But I don't

0:08:26.490,0:08:32.169
I don't know the...what's the right word, like abortion, right?

0:08:32.720,0:08:39.120
Yeah, she got abortion, and because she worried about the fine

0:08:39.370,0:08:42.000

0:08:42.169,0:08:43.070

0:08:43.289,0:08:47.230
like not complying with the one-child policy.

0:08:47.450,0:08:48.940

0:08:49.800,0:08:52.370
How old were you? Do you know when that happened?

0:08:53.220,0:08:54.740
Maybe a teenager.

0:08:58.010,0:09:00.760
Did your mom express her emotions about that experience?

0:09:02.480,0:09:15.800
Yeah, she didn't tell me at that moment, but she told me many years ago, like I, was in my twenties. When the first time

0:09:15.910,0:09:24.930
I left my hometown to university, and she told me about her experience. Yeah, she felt

0:09:24.990,0:09:26.230

0:09:26.420,0:09:31.060
regretful about losing a child.

0:09:31.260,0:09:39.110
That must have been a very painful, emotionally painful experience for her, I imagine.

0:09:39.290,0:09:49.430
Yeah, kind of painful, but she chose to do that. And actually, in my hometown, the one child policy was not that constrained.

0:09:49.710,0:09:56.200
I mean strict, and so no one forced her, but there

0:09:56.680,0:10:00.470
there were fines. There were fines? Yeah, yeah.

0:10:00.830,0:10:03.130
So were most of the

0:10:03.230,0:10:09.020
children in your community when you were growing up, were most of them the only child in the family?

0:10:09.640,0:10:15.020
Yeah, most families in our village. Only one child. Yeah.

0:10:15.490,0:10:19.240
You mentioned a little bit about

0:10:19.420,0:10:33.390
growing up in an agricultural area, and your grandmother and I'm wondering if you have memories of particular foods when you were growing up? Certain dishes that you ate often, or

0:10:33.970,0:10:38.180
maybe special meals that you had on holidays or something like that?

0:10:38.580,0:10:49.670
Okay, yeah, I mean, all our food was from our farm and our livestock. So we ate a lot of wheat.

0:10:49.720,0:10:55.300
We ate a lot pork and chicken

0:10:56.500,0:10:58.120
and eggs.

0:10:58.160,0:11:04.280
So what about rice? Was rice important in your diet?

0:11:04.420,0:11:06.270
No, wheat.

0:11:06.390,0:11:13.690
We don't have rice in northern China. Okay, interesting. It's like, you know, you imported food

0:11:14.200,0:11:16.540
imported from southern China.

0:11:16.670,0:11:19.230
Yeah, I remember

0:11:19.250,0:11:22.720
I didn't have any rice

0:11:22.840,0:11:27.180
when I was a child. It was not easy to get them.

0:11:28.970,0:11:39.340
You mentioned that the area was a poor area. Were you conscious of that when you were a child, of maybe not having enough, or of it being

0:11:39.360,0:11:45.010
a low-income area, or were you not conscious of that until later in life?

0:11:45.680,0:11:48.440
Yeah, I think later in my life

0:11:49.150,0:11:53.640
When I was little you know I didn't understand many things.

0:11:54.150,0:11:56.200
Because I didn't have comparison.

0:11:56.230,0:12:07.830
So yeah, I didn't know like how my life is compared to other life. How like the economy in our area compared to

0:12:08.810,0:12:15.170
you know the other area. I didn't know. But so when I went to university

0:12:15.270,0:12:19.300
I realized the difference

0:12:19.850,0:12:30.490
between my hometown and other places, especially the you know, the the big city like Beijing, Shenzhen.

0:12:31.640,0:12:36.350
Can you tell me about your education when you were growing up in your home village?

0:12:36.720,0:12:38.770
Yeah, sure.

0:12:38.820,0:12:40.680
I think

0:12:40.740,0:12:48.590
education, it's a big topic in my life. Maybe it's the most important thing

0:12:49.040,0:12:50.940
that

0:12:51.370,0:12:55.270
you know led me to where I am today.

0:12:55.640,0:12:59.330
My parents didn't get

0:12:59.610,0:13:05.960
any formal education, or maybe a little bit. Not like nothing.

0:13:06.250,0:13:10.800
They told me they went to elementary school.

0:13:10.840,0:13:11.830
Then

0:13:11.940,0:13:21.490
They started to work after they graduated from elementary school. Wow, how old were they when they started working?

0:13:21.750,0:13:24.380
Let me think about it

0:13:25.230,0:13:28.550
Maybe like 16 or

0:13:28.680,0:13:31.930
18. Working in a factory?

0:13:32.120,0:13:34.680
No, no, no, no.

0:13:35.300,0:13:41.890
I mean, working on farms full-time.

0:13:42.030,0:13:50.060
Yeah, back then many Chinese didn't have that kind of life, right? They didn't have much

0:13:50.260,0:13:55.880
opportunity ... to go to get formal education, and

0:13:56.120,0:14:00.630
they had to make money for the whole family

0:14:00.660,0:14:05.400
Otherwise they couldn't get enough food. And

0:14:05.520,0:14:06.650
so

0:14:09.230,0:14:10.460
I mean, like

0:14:11.850,0:14:15.430
considering that education level

0:14:15.670,0:14:18.810
they didn't have the consciousness to

0:14:19.500,0:14:22.800
give me good education.

0:14:24.570,0:14:28.250
I remember when I was like in

0:14:29.240,0:14:37.410
middle school. Yes, once they talked with me about my future, and

0:14:37.810,0:14:50.800
they wanted me to work in a factory where they worked and because they

0:14:52.200,0:15:06.580
I mean, they wanted me to make some money for our family, and they wanted me to be independent.
And additionally they didn't realize how education can

0:15:07.170,0:15:10.810
change a child's life.

0:15:11.230,0:15:14.350
Yeah. But fortunately, I'm sorry?

0:15:14.380,0:15:22.710
Fortunately I didn't go to (the) factory and work there, and I

0:15:23.050,0:15:30.880
got very good score in middle school, and then I went to high school

0:15:31.160,0:15:40.310
and then university, but at that time many of my peers didn't have a chance to go to

0:15:40.670,0:15:54.080
high school, I mean like as an American, you might not be able to understand that, but you know
it's limited educational resources. Not many people

0:15:54.100,0:15:54.930

0:15:55.560,0:16:00.160
can go to middle school, maybe even high school, maybe only

0:16:00.920,0:16:05.140
20 or 30% of my middle school peers

0:16:05.510,0:16:08.470
had an opportunity to

0:16:08.790,0:16:11.480
enter high school. Yeah.

0:16:12.660,0:16:14.120
So when you were

0:16:14.170,0:16:20.850
going to elementary school, was that located right in your village? Yeah, pretty close.

0:16:21.200,0:16:25.140
Would you walk to school?

0:16:25.530,0:16:26.610
I walked.

0:16:27.650,0:16:30.740
And was your high school also located nearby?

0:16:31.190,0:16:40.380
No. So yeah, my elementary school was in my village, right? And when I went to middle school

0:16:40.860,0:16:44.480
I had to, you know, like

0:16:45.770,0:17:00.120
ride a bike, and to the middle school, because it is outside my village. It's like 10 miles away from my village. When I went to high school, I started to

0:17:00.890,0:17:02.400
you know, live there

0:17:03.200,0:17:07.280
because it's too far away from my home. Yeah.

0:17:07.490,0:17:14.319
So you lived in the same area where your high school was? You were not living at home when you went to high school?

0:17:14.710,0:17:19.569
It depends on the definition of the same area.

0:17:19.700,0:17:27.000
It is about the distance of like 20 miles, 30 miles away.

0:17:28.000,0:17:35.680
Like you lived in a student dormitory at that time? Yeah I used to live in a dorm.

0:17:35.720,0:17:44.520
So tell me, when you were in elementary school, middle school, high school, what were your favorite academic subjects?

0:17:45.060,0:17:48.300
Oh. that's good question.

0:17:49.550,0:17:51.190
I liked math

0:17:52.600,0:17:54.570
and I was good at math.

0:17:55.500,0:18:01.960
Yeah, I found I liked and was good at math when I was in

0:18:02.510,0:18:06.600
the middle school. So in middle school I

0:18:07.890,0:18:09.090

0:18:10.900,0:18:19.760
Oh, okay, what's the name of the competition like Olympiad, right? International Math Olympiad.

0:18:20.220,0:18:32.060
International Math Olympiad? Yeah, yeah, yeah, that kind of thing. Yeah, a very fancy name. Yeah, I won first prize, a national prize or something.

0:18:32.260,0:18:32.940
Yeah.

0:18:33.450,0:18:43.040
You won the first prize in that competition?

0:18:43.440,0:18:53.450

Yeah national. And were you, now your parents did not have, you mentioned they did not have access to higher education. They stopped at an early age, and you grew up in this rural area

0:18:53.740,0:18:59.070

So did you, was the expectation for you

0:18:59.160,0:19:07.650

that you would finish high school and then return to your village, and that would be the end of your education? Did you, were you told

0:19:09.530,0:19:15.790

that there were limitations on how much education you could receive?

0:19:20.440,0:19:23.130

Yeah, the turning point

0:19:23.690,0:19:31.240

happened when I was in middle school, but after I got into high school, and

0:19:31.520,0:19:34.070

that sort of changed

0:19:34.270,0:19:43.590

because as I said, only 20 percent of my middle school peers had an opportunity to go to high school, so

0:19:43.710,0:19:46.280

when I got offered, when I got in

0:19:46.670,0:19:49.130

high school, I mean and

0:19:50.260,0:19:53.100

I could tell they started to think about my

0:19:53.430,0:19:58.670

academic future, because they saw talent in

0:19:59.790,0:20:02.740

my young self

0:20:03.740,0:20:11.190

but they didn't expect I can go to a good university in my country

0:20:13.660,0:20:20.200

but they do hope I can have a bright future, I mean a brighter future than they had.

0:20:20.910,0:20:31.770

So if I remember correctly, when you were in my class, you mentioned something about being told that people from your community didn't have the genetic

0:20:31.840,0:20:44.560

capability to go to university. Can you talk a little bit about that? Oh yeah,

0:20:44.760,0:20:55.630

I might be the first university student from my village... because most of the villagers and their next generation

0:20:56.030,0:20:57.990

didn't have a chance to

0:20:58.830,0:21:02.050

go to university or high school.

0:21:02.060,0:21:03.950

and why?

0:21:06.040,0:21:09.990

I think limited resources is one of the reasons and the

0:21:10.310,0:21:14.050

second important reason was

0:21:16.940,0:21:19.960
they didn't believe

0:21:20.120,0:21:23.670
they were qualified

0:21:24.670,0:21:25.340
to

0:21:25.850,0:21:30.650
be a university student, or their next generation would

0:21:30.870,0:21:34.780
qualify to be a university student

0:21:37.150,0:21:41.990
So I think... Who communicated that message

0:21:42.580,0:21:55.120
to people in your community? Like you're not going to go further in your education? You don't have the capacity for it? Was it the teachers who were saying that, or who was saying that? How did that mentality come to be?

0:21:55.380,0:22:02.690
You know sometimes there was not, there was not an announcement or

0:22:02.710,0:22:06.800
agreement between everyone.

0:22:06.880,0:22:12.660
There was just like a common sense among a group of people.

0:22:13.000,0:22:18.520
People didn't talk about oh, our next generation

0:22:18.770,0:22:22.480
would not go to university. People just

0:22:22.530,0:22:33.140
didn't talk about anything about universities. They didn't talk about this possibility, meaning they didn't have expectation. They didn't believe

0:22:34.500,0:22:37.560
it would happen, right?

0:22:37.740,0:22:47.240
Yeah. So it's fascinating to me that you took such a different path, and I'm curious about how you ended up

0:22:48.860,0:22:59.580
becoming aware of other opportunities, and how you were able to create such a different life for yourself compared to other young people from your community.

0:22:59.680,0:23:01.770
What made the big difference?

0:23:06.610,0:23:19.630
Oh, it's hard to answer. To be honest, I would like to share a very inspiring story like when I was little. I don't... like aware of that. But it's not true

0:23:19.640,0:23:22.410
So before I went to university, I

0:23:24.250,0:23:27.470
you know I was not aware strongly

0:23:27.600,0:23:36.970
of my future, or I didn't intentionally study hard to change my life. No, I just

0:23:38.360,0:23:53.200
you know I just did what I wanted to do. I, as I said I, I loved science. I loved math, and I was good at it. And, to be honest, I enjoyed the

0:23:53.330,0:23:55.260
you know the

0:23:55.310,0:24:01.390
praise from teachers or the mind for my classmates.

0:24:01.830,0:24:06.090
That's what I truly cared about, so I

0:24:06.360,0:24:09.580
studied hard and

0:24:09.840,0:24:13.230
I worked hard. I got nice score

0:24:13.320,0:24:20.600
Then I got into the university, but after I went to university, I started to think about it.

0:24:20.620,0:24:22.510
I started to

0:24:22.550,0:24:24.960
You know I realized how

0:24:25.280,0:24:29.590
lucky I was. Even I didn't study hard

0:24:30.000,0:24:33.500
intentionally to

0:24:33.650,0:24:39.200
change my life. I didn't have the idea of changing my life

0:24:39.280,0:24:44.350
or using the power of education. I didn't, before I

0:24:44.440,0:24:50.810
went to university. But when I was in university, I told my friends I was so lucky.

0:24:51.990,0:25:04.700
Your parents must have been very, very proud of you, too, as you continued to do really well at each level and passing exams and winning this mathematics competition.

0:25:04.720,0:25:08.600
Did they express that to you, being proud of you?

0:25:09.210,0:25:19.520
Yeah, yeah, They were proud of me, especially, I'm the first, you know, university student from my village. And

0:25:19.790,0:25:21.510
yeah, they enjoyed talking about

0:25:21.720,0:25:33.900
my educational accomplishments back then, like kind of showed off to the other villagers. Yeah.

0:25:34.000,0:25:35.550
So when did you...

0:25:36.550,0:25:55.350
Let's say, when you went to university, you probably started understanding that there was this big world out there that was very different from the community that you grew up in. And how did that change your goals or your direction, or your motivation once you started understanding that,

0:25:55.820,0:26:04.510

you know, there are these big cities, and there are places to travel. Can you talk a little bit about your world opening up when you first went to university?

0:26:05.140,0:26:07.390
Yeah. So

0:26:08.720,0:26:13.380
I think the determining factor was

0:26:13.540,0:26:18.420
I realized how different people's lives can be

0:26:19.210,0:26:20.550
and

0:26:20.970,0:26:32.260
I realized how lucky I was because I studied hard and got into the university

0:26:32.400,0:26:33.450

0:26:37.230,0:26:43.230
So I believe when I was in university, I was a

0:26:43.290,0:26:57.750
"late bird." I'm not sure this phrase is correct? I mean "early bird, a late bird." I mean like I started to have these resources or awareness very late.

0:26:57.800,0:27:04.910
So I had to work harder than my university peers

0:27:05.230,0:27:09.210
to get outstanding, to make this

0:27:10.570,0:27:11.860
story...

0:27:12.260,0:27:14.970
Sometimes we have...

0:27:14.980,0:27:17.490
Is that the expression you're looking for? A late bloomer?

0:27:17.910,0:27:20.740
Oh, sorry, late for what? Bloomer.

0:27:21.260,0:27:23.590
It's like blossoming.

0:27:24.650,0:27:26.670
You know, early bird,

0:27:26.810,0:27:33.910
Early bird, like when you were young, or you started early

0:27:34.030,0:27:45.530
or like when you were young, you had much resources, you had more resources than your peers, I mean like that's "early bird" for me. I'm a "late bird."

0:27:45.530,0:28:00.870
Yeah, I didn't have much resources. I didn't have... No one told me like what I should do, right? How you should go to university. No one told me. I'm just like, I'm confused in the world. Finally I went to the high school and the university. I realized

0:28:01.500,0:28:05.670
back then, I was already 20,

0:28:05.730,0:28:08.090
Yeah, maybe 20 years old.

0:28:09.100,0:28:10.720

and I started to

0:28:12.300,0:28:16.200
have awareness that I was supposed to help

0:28:16.260,0:28:20.010
when I was 15 or 14 years old.

0:28:21.230,0:28:33.530
So was there a mentor or university professor, or someone who started to guide you, who started to help you at some point about directing your career or your education?

0:28:35.480,0:28:37.990
Unfortunately, there were not.

0:28:39.600,0:28:47.530
So tell me a little bit about your experience in university and your goals. I know you started off working in

0:28:48.070,0:28:55.820
one field, and you ended up having a bit of a career switch. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

0:28:59.840,0:29:10.550
Yeah sure. So as I said, I thought I was very good at math right, and I won a prize or something

0:29:11.180,0:29:23.770
After I got into university, I found there was so many talented people. They are more talented than I was.

0:29:24.050,0:29:27.840
And the more I realized that, the

0:29:28.080,0:29:31.420
less confidence I had

0:29:31.710,0:29:39.030
So I had a tough, a hard time during the first year in in the university, and

0:29:40.420,0:29:49.690
then I told myself like it was not easy to get here, where I

0:29:50.160,0:29:53.300
was not, right?I mean back then.

0:29:53.320,0:30:05.760
So don't waste this opportunity and then I started to challenge myself. Back then I couldn't

0:30:07.500,0:30:10.670
speak Mandarin very well

0:30:10.700,0:30:14.670
And so

0:30:15.220,0:30:22.590
a good way to help me solve this problem was to join student clubs. I started

0:30:22.600,0:30:26.900
to join many student clubs, interact with

0:30:28.220,0:30:30.870
my peers who were from

0:30:31.130,0:30:34.760
big cities, right, instead of small village.

0:30:34.800,0:30:41.660
And I try to be outstanding among them.

0:30:41.710,0:30:56.210

As a language teacher, I'm very interested in what you just said about not being able to speak Mandarin very well. When you were growing up, did you speak a different dialect of Mandarin Chinese or a different language?

0:30:56.210,0:31:02.750

Did you have an accent that was perceived by others at the university as being more rural?

0:31:05.750,0:31:18.660

Mm, hm. Yeah, there's a southern dialect in China. And in my village people speak a very unique dialect which is very different from Mandarin.

0:31:18.980,0:31:30.900

So I didn't speak much Mandarin in my daily life before going to university. So I was not used to it.

0:31:31.880,0:31:34.980

Is there discrimination against people who have

0:31:35.200,0:31:37.450

what's considered non-standard

0:31:37.730,0:31:45.460

Chinese, or because of the way you spoke, did people discriminate against you once you got to the

0:31:45.570,0:31:47.070

to larger cities?

0:31:49.530,0:32:01.830

Like, did people look down on you? I understand your question. Yeah. I just try to recall what happened.

0:32:03.970,0:32:08.730

Yeah, I'm not sure that

0:32:08.950,0:32:11.160

my accent was

0:32:11.950,0:32:16.960

laughed at. I don't think so.

0:32:17.130,0:32:25.620

But my origin makes them, makes all my peers look down at me

0:32:27.820,0:32:36.240

because I didn't understand many things they were talking about, you know, kind of

0:32:36.590,0:32:45.050

art. music, you know, like fancy hobbies. I didn't have any, right? I didn't even

0:32:45.340,0:32:53.860

find McDonald's or KFC back then, because they was no KFC or McDonald's or that kind of fancy restaurant in my hometown.

0:32:54.150,0:32:55.310

Interesting.

0:32:56.340,0:33:15.650

So once you started seeing all these opportunities, did it make you want to get a high paying job? If I remember correctly, like that was something that you were very interested in doing, in working in business?

0:33:17.900,0:33:21.430

Yeah, I think the main reason

0:33:21.460,0:33:23.810

why I chose my first job

0:33:24.300,0:33:27.200

because it was fancy and

0:33:27.940,0:33:35.250
kind of you know gave much high salary. Yeah.

0:33:35.700,0:33:37.480
So tell me about your first job.

0:33:38.010,0:33:40.510
Yeah. My first job

0:33:41.760,0:33:47.040
was working for American company as a multinational company.

0:33:49.730,0:33:58.310
That's a leadership program, and it's not guaranteed. But you might be

0:33:58.650,0:34:04.780
manager after that program. So why I chose

0:34:04.860,0:34:08.210
that job at my first one, because

0:34:09.030,0:34:12.690
it was fancy, multinational, right?

0:34:13.050,0:34:21.790
From a village to an international company. Yeah, that's a good story, that's inspiring. And then

0:34:22.060,0:34:25.290
the pay was good.

0:34:25.570,0:34:29.010
Yeah, it was better than

0:34:29.150,0:34:33.380
most jobs that my peers could get.

0:34:33.469,0:34:38.360
And did that enable you to send money back to your parents and help them?

0:34:41.969,0:34:47.620
Yeah, they didn't need that. They didn't need me to send back money.

0:34:47.630,0:34:48.540
But

0:34:49.179,0:34:50.540
I

0:34:51.850,0:34:54.699
you know I intentionally sent back

0:34:55.080,0:34:55.800

0:34:55.830,0:34:56.480

0:34:58.700,0:35:07.570
to you know send some back to them. And doing that made me feel very proud of myself

0:35:07.910,0:35:13.350
Yeah. Something I remember you mentioning when you were in my class was how

0:35:13.740,0:35:21.870
you had this idea about status, about buying fancy things, a fancy apartment.

0:35:23.750,0:35:25.240
Status symbols.

0:35:25.330,0:35:26.430

And then

0:35:26.460,0:35:32.280
you did that. But you still felt like there was something missing in your life.

0:35:32.570,0:35:43.400
Can you talk a little bit about that, about how, what sort of things you bought? These status symbols and your feelings and emotions about them.

0:35:45.710,0:35:50.460
Yeah because the first state is about money.

0:35:50.610,0:35:52.810
I didn't have money.

0:35:52.930,0:36:04.640
My family didn't have money. I'm from a poor family, so much I left them.

0:36:04.970,0:36:09.420
The more I want you to get them.

0:36:10.180,0:36:18.020
I worked very hard to make money. Then I bought a house. I bought apartment, not house in China

0:36:18.340,0:36:23.310
... but I bought an apartment and a fancy car

0:36:23.320,0:36:28.350
about a year later, after I got my first car

0:36:29.020,0:36:30.070
and

0:36:30.130,0:36:34.700
I felt proud of myself, and I

0:36:34.830,0:36:45.800
had the ability to send back money to my parents. I could buy what they need and what I need

0:36:45.950,0:36:52.870
for us and they could show off again

0:36:53.220,0:37:00.480
with other villagers, right? That's what our son bought for us

0:37:00.700,0:37:01.850

0:37:02.700,0:37:08.560
I enjoyed doing, that to be honest. Yeah, I feel we're satisfied.

0:37:09.700,0:37:20.360
But after I got all that I wanted, what I thought was important.

0:37:23.990,0:37:27.780
I don't, it's hard to describe that kind of feeling.

0:37:27.960,0:37:29.150
I just feel

0:37:29.270,0:37:33.640
I felt I'm unsatisfied. It's feels like

0:37:34.020,0:37:36.840
I did that all for

0:37:42.850,0:37:43.450

0:37:43.930,0:37:48.060
to make, you know, to make others look up to me.

0:37:48.100,0:37:49.010

0:37:52.450,0:37:54.700
to make myself

0:37:56.020,0:38:04.150
outstanding, much more outstanding among my peers in village.

0:38:05.590,0:38:07.100
Then I could

0:38:08.830,0:38:10.980
brag or

0:38:12.910,0:38:15.670
yeah, it suddenly became very

0:38:15.790,0:38:18.130
meaningless to me

0:38:19.260,0:38:24.520
Yeah, so that's what I wanted. I asked myself

0:38:25.120,0:38:27.660
I didn't feel happy anymore.

0:38:28.800,0:38:38.470
So I spent many years thinking about what I really want, what I really need, and

0:38:38.580,0:38:41.660
what I really want to

0:38:42.280,0:38:48.800
do to myself and people in community around me.

0:38:49.150,0:38:56.000
So I started to get deeper into the

0:38:56.620,0:39:05.270
meaning of my life and into the motivation of my life.

0:39:06.810,0:39:08.030
So the

0:39:09.220,0:39:14.140
success that you had in terms of being able to

0:39:14.320,0:39:18.550
buy a fancy apartment and a fancy car, and you

0:39:18.890,0:39:27.590
realized that those things were not buying you happiness and being richer than the

0:39:28.200,0:39:35.920
the classmates that you grew up with, that that wasn't bringing you happiness, either. So

0:39:36.420,0:39:44.540
what did you do to try to figure out your next steps? You have all this stuff, you have status.
You have

0:39:44.550,0:39:50.520
a very comfortable life and parents that brag about you, but you know

0:39:51.000,0:39:55.820
you felt empty, or you felt like I think you said that this was meaningless.

0:39:56.530,0:40:02.210
Yeah, I feel empty. I feel empty. I

0:40:02.490,0:40:10.390
though those things did bring me a happiness. But it was very short.

0:40:11.670,0:40:15.780
Yeah. So I wanted

0:40:16.220,0:40:24.610
like a continuous happiness or a sense of accomplishment and

0:40:24.730,0:40:28.040
I sacrifice many different things, like

0:40:28.380,0:40:31.230
volunteer or

0:40:31.260,0:40:39.710
trying to care more about people around me, you know, like when your folks are making money.

0:40:40.250,0:40:50.070
you might become to be a very mean person.

0:40:50.170,0:40:54.330

0:40:56.110,0:41:01.570
So I started to be nicer, to be friendly, to be kind

0:41:01.670,0:41:10.690
to people around me. I started to care about the community where I lived in.

0:41:10.840,0:41:17.270
Yeah, that's what I did to figure out what's already made me

0:41:17.490,0:41:26.070
continuously happy. Did you try to reach out to the community where you grew up to help people there?

0:41:26.520,0:41:29.110
You mean my village.

0:41:34.650,0:41:42.670
Or were you focused more on, you mentioned volunteer work? Was that in Beijing where you started doing volunteer work?

0:41:43.200,0:41:46.000
Yeah, it was easier to

0:41:46.170,0:41:54.200
volunteer in big city in Beijing, right? Could you tell me about like the type of volunteer work that you did?

0:41:54.530,0:41:57.410
Oh, yeah, sure.

0:41:59.930,0:42:01.070
So

0:42:01.180,0:42:04.120
once I went to

0:42:05.690,0:42:11.030
I'm not sure. It's a kindergarten, or yeah, it's kind of like kindergarten.

0:42:11.480,0:42:13.710
but the children

0:42:14.420,0:42:16.480
in that kindergarten

0:42:18.400,0:42:20.280
well, who

0:42:20.370,0:42:21.850
didn't have

0:42:22.950,0:42:34.160
parents on their side because their parents went to jail and they were in jail service

0:42:34.460,0:42:38.040
back then. So that's why

0:42:38.110,0:42:43.070
the children were sent to the national kindergarten.

0:42:44.300,0:42:47.280
and I

0:42:47.830,0:42:52.690
volunteered there for like two years

0:42:52.960,0:42:59.700
I went there regularly with some of my friends and co-workers

0:43:00.300,0:43:12.560
to work with them and play with them and to share our stories with them. So

0:43:15.610,0:43:23.160
I think what we did might change their life. I don't know know, but I hope so. I hope

0:43:23.360,0:43:28.880
our kindness, our time time being with them

0:43:29.980,0:43:37.780
could make them feel better about this world and encourage them to

0:43:39.190,0:43:42.830
escape from their

0:43:43.980,0:43:53.820
limitation of the life. So did you feel a shift in yourself? Did you start to feel happier once you started volunteering and helping out

0:43:54.170,0:44:00.050
helping these children? Did you start to feel more meaning in your life?

0:44:00.380,0:44:01.480

0:44:02.270,0:44:10.730
Yeah, at least I got more and long continuous happiness than

0:44:10.920,0:44:15.660
buying an apartment and a fancy car.

0:44:16.430,0:44:18.170
Yeah. So

0:44:19.130,0:44:26.310
I think that was a right path giving out

0:44:27.830,0:44:29.450
can give me

0:44:30.530,0:44:37.520
more happiness and a sense of accomplishment than getting something

0:44:40.710,0:44:46.500
Do you hope to some day be able to help children

0:44:46.630,0:44:53.350
in the community where you grew up, in that village? Do you have some ideas about how you might be able to

0:44:53.860,0:45:01.160
maybe inspire children or young people in your village to seek a higher education?

0:45:02.000,0:45:17.040
I hope I will have that opportunity. But it is not easy. Yeah, all we can do sometimes it depends on the environment. But I really hope I can continue to

0:45:17.200,0:45:19.300
the place where I grew up.

0:45:21.270,0:45:29.120
I'm very curious about how you ended up living in the United States, and what your ideas were

0:45:29.400,0:45:36.000
about American life and American culture before you came here. Did you

0:45:36.300,0:45:39.870
have ideas about the United States from

0:45:39.880,0:45:46.690
movies or television? Sometimes students tell me that they have this

0:45:46.760,0:45:53.380
vision of the American Dream based on Hollywood. And then they come here and they realize oh

0:45:53.800,0:45:59.040
it's really not the reality. Did that happen to you?

0:46:01.380,0:46:08.090
Yeah. Similar story. I didn't have expectation, but kind of negative.

0:46:08.400,0:46:19.570
When I decided to immigrate to the United States was when I was like in my thirties, right? So I

0:46:20.360,0:46:31.490
heard a lot of stories. I watched a lot of movies, news, also from media in China. and I read books

0:46:33.860,0:46:41.060
I didn't expect American Dream about like a very

0:46:41.170,0:46:43.630
positive side.

0:46:43.660,0:46:54.980
Most what I saw was the the negative side of the U.S. like you know, like the racists, racism,

0:46:55.150,0:47:00.700
the gun issue, drug issue,

0:47:00.850,0:47:02.240
that kind of thing.

0:47:02.340,0:47:14.980
Yeah, you had an idea about America that was related to violence and racism. Did you form those ideas based on media that you

0:47:15.110,0:47:22.940
consumed in China? Was the news coverage about America focused on problems related to race and gun violence?

0:47:23.220,0:47:28.350
Yeah, I guess so. I guess so. From social media in China.

0:47:28.450,0:47:31.690
and not only social media in China, but also

0:47:31.860,0:47:35.530
some social media from the United States because

0:47:36.000,0:47:41.260
even like Twitter. Facebook, was blocked in China, but I had VPN

0:47:41.560,0:47:46.800
VPN. I don't know how to explain it. It's like

0:47:47.080,0:47:49.820
... a secure server?

0:47:50.010,0:47:55.270
Yeah kind of like that. So I could browse on Twitter

0:47:55.590,0:47:57.170
using VPN

0:47:57.340,0:48:03.770
So yeah, I read a little bit about that, and that's one source and the other

0:48:04.110,0:48:06.030
the other one is

0:48:06.550,0:48:16.390
was American movies. Yeah. So I found it's a good part of American culture.

0:48:16.700,0:48:21.650
Americans never try to cover

0:48:21.920,0:48:32.600
the issues in the United States, right? They portray truly in movies about racism,

0:48:32.680,0:48:45.320
about some conflicts in this society involved (this) kind of issue. Interesting. So were you a
little bit nervous about moving to the United States? Did you feel

0:48:45.400,0:48:50.290
worried about encountering racism or violence here?

0:48:50.980,0:48:59.050
I was nervous. I was much worried about my personal security.

0:49:00.540,0:49:02.650
Yeah, the gun issue

0:49:03.610,0:49:05.490
I was kind of scared

0:49:05.510,0:49:07.560

0:49:07.760,0:49:11.110
Before I moved here. Yeah.

0:49:11.950,0:49:14.150
And then, once you moved here...

0:49:14.700,0:49:26.320
No, I feel much better. Can you tell me more about that?

0:49:28.130,0:49:32.950
I feel much better. I live in Rockville, in Maryland. I believe this is area is safe. I didn't

0:49:33.420,0:49:41.130
experience living in other areas like Baltimore. I heard that area

0:49:41.430,0:49:51.880
and the kind of, that the criminal rate is kind of high. I I don't know. but based on my current
experience,

0:49:53.660,0:49:58.800
I don't feel the danger that

0:49:58.860,0:50:05.130
I expected before I moved here.

0:50:05.420,0:50:14.060
Interesting. Have you encountered racism against Chinese people since you've been living here?

0:50:14.250,0:50:18.200
In my real life? Not yet. Not yet. I hope I won't.

0:50:19.080,0:50:25.730
I hope you won't either. Rockville is a fine space. I think

0:50:30.770,0:50:33.490
I don't know how to deal with it,

0:50:33.580,0:50:38.240
but I think will be fine.

0:50:38.310,0:50:43.180
I think I'm much stronger than I think I am.

0:50:44.540,0:50:45.240
Yeah.

0:50:45.920,0:50:53.060
What would you like Americans to understand about being a Chinese person in the United States?

0:50:53.740,0:50:58.730
Oh that's a good question. That's a good question.

0:51:04.450,0:51:10.020
I haven't talked with many Americans about their,

0:51:10.900,0:51:15.960
you know, ideas what Chinese people look like or

0:51:16.170,0:51:19.350
this stereotype, right? So

0:51:21.760,0:51:25.040
I don't have any assumption, but

0:51:25.630,0:51:34.350
I can share my real life experience with you. Once I had lunch with

0:51:34.760,0:51:38.810
one of my friend's parents

0:51:39.370,0:51:48.450
and they asked me a very interesting question. They asked that

0:51:50.620,0:51:54.720
Are there still many arranged marriages in China?

0:51:57.230,0:52:01.420
The answer is no, right?

0:52:01.520,0:52:05.300
But what they talk about was

0:52:05.770,0:52:06.550
like

0:52:08.010,0:52:11.750
20 years ago or 30 years ago in China.

0:52:11.870,0:52:15.480
and let me assume that

0:52:15.780,0:52:18.470
they thought

0:52:18.870,0:52:27.030

like most Americans thought about Chinese people or Chinese culture. So

0:52:28.830,0:52:36.400

I think Chinese people know better about the United States than American people

0:52:36.680,0:52:42.260

know about China, about Chinese people. That's really interesting. Yeah.

0:52:42.740,0:53:00.150

So do you try to communicate to others your, a little bit about your experience, or about your background Do you have opportunities to share your culture with Americans here?

0:53:00.610,0:53:05.990

I'm trying to think, maybe opportunities to talk with Americans about

0:53:06.220,0:53:08.180

what it means to be Chinese?

0:53:09.790,0:53:10.380

Yeah.

0:53:10.770,0:53:15.790

I don't do that proactively. Yeah.

0:53:18.230,0:53:21.410

But if people ask me, I would like to share.

0:53:22.310,0:53:27.780

And what do you share when people ask you this? When you have the opportunity to share something about

0:53:28.560,0:53:34.650

being a Chinese immigrant in the United States, what aspects of your culture do you like to share?

0:53:35.260,0:53:35.860

Hmm.

0:53:38.960,0:53:42.830

I would like to share the change. All my

0:53:44.020,0:53:45.820

thoughts about

0:53:48.710,0:53:51.630

the United States, about my

0:53:52.650,0:53:57.670

home country, China, about my

0:53:58.160,0:54:01.820

about the blind spot I had before.

0:54:02.140,0:54:03.520

Before I moved here.

0:54:05.870,0:54:11.720

I think that term "blind spot" is very interesting. Can you say more about that? What were your blind spots?

0:54:12.100,0:54:14.410

My blind spots

0:54:17.170,0:54:23.110

Blind spot means I didn't realize many things

0:54:23.730,0:54:26.730

before I moved here, for example.

0:54:31.860,0:54:40.950
So your class, right? I really enjoyed it. And when we talk about discrimination,

0:54:41.820,0:54:54.960
and we learned essays, right? And during the process, I didn't only think about the topic we talked about, but also

0:54:55.170,0:54:56.610
think about

0:54:58.780,0:55:01.430
discrimination in my home country.

0:55:02.640,0:55:07.200
So before I moved here, my idea of what it says.

0:55:09.980,0:55:20.380
the United States, the most racist country there are like much discrimination that's in that society. But in China it's fine (in) schools, right? So.

0:55:20.460,0:55:28.560
But when I worked on the that essay, I realized actually

0:55:30.010,0:55:33.890
there are different types of discrimination in China.

0:55:34.070,0:55:40.740
It's not based on race. It's based on the

0:55:41.240,0:55:42.740
social classes

0:55:43.050,0:55:44.050
Interesting

0:55:44.120,0:55:46.430
Yeah. And it's based on

0:55:46.770,0:55:56.820
where you are from. You are from city? You are from village? You are from north of China?

0:55:58.590,0:56:00.690
Or south of China? You are from

0:56:03.600,0:56:09.390
like inner city or like coastal city?

0:56:10.680,0:56:12.530
Or like what job you are doing?

0:56:13.200,0:56:19.010
You're a CEO?

0:56:19.150,0:56:24.580
Or you are

0:56:24.610,0:56:28.730
nurse or a teacher or something. Your

0:56:28.830,0:56:33.200
occupation, your income can decide on

0:56:33.500,0:56:36.470
your social classes and

0:56:37.400,0:56:43.690
can decide how much social resources you have. And

0:56:50.570,0:57:02.090
yeah, and based on those tags. Right? Your occupation or the social resources you have. People started

0:57:07.170,0:57:16.320

to judge on your value, to judge on which social class you belong to.

0:57:16.570,0:57:21.220

And so that's how the discrimination in my home country happens.

0:57:22.000,0:57:22.910

0:57:23.450,0:57:34.960

You know. What you said is very interesting because sometimes we have to step outside of our home country and our home culture in order to see it clearly. I felt that way

0:57:35.170,0:57:38.840

when I was in my twenties living in France.

0:57:38.980,0:57:48.760

It was there that I began to have a better understanding about American culture. It's like you have to kind of leave for a while in order to get

0:57:48.970,0:57:55.020

a clearer picture. Is that how you feel?

0:57:55.400,0:57:56.110

Yeah. Exactly, yeah.

0:57:57.030,0:58:08.160

Can you tell me a little bit about your experience at Montgomery College? How it helped you in terms of language or in terms of understanding American culture?

0:58:10.450,0:58:18.680

Yeah. Firstly, let me talk about why I went to MC. So

0:58:19.550,0:58:22.080

I went to MC

0:58:24.560,0:58:30.210

in the second or third month after I moved here.

0:58:33.080,0:58:38.890

Yeah, that's it. I wasn't very nervous about my new life here.

0:58:39.760,0:58:42.650

I'm going to tell you a very funny story.

0:58:42.680,0:58:47.880

So after I moved here to Rockville

0:58:47.890,0:58:48.910

and

0:58:49.720,0:58:58.940

I went to Five Guys, the same restaurant right? To order a burger. I was scared of speaking English

0:58:59.390,0:59:00.960

or answering.

0:59:01.070,0:59:03.800

responding to people's questions.

0:59:04.060,0:59:07.210

So when I was in Five Guys

0:59:07.850,0:59:12.810

That guy working in Five Guy,s said to me

0:59:14.210,0:59:16.530

"What toppings would you like?"

0:59:18.980,0:59:23.850
Toppings? I didn't understand

0:59:24.010,0:59:27.220
what "toppings" means.

0:59:27.460,0:59:37.370
So I thought "toppings" means on top, meaning very high or something. I mean, I thought, toppings, you need to pay extra money.

0:59:38.020,0:59:44.960
Right, right. "Toppings" sound very expensive, now

0:59:45.070,0:59:48.310
what? Topping, I don't know what it is.

0:59:48.410,0:59:50.860
So I said uh, no thanks.

0:59:51.490,0:59:58.000
And that guy asks me, are you sure? I feel sure.

0:59:58.060,1:00:01.050
I ended up

1:00:01.560,1:00:04.930
having a burger with only

1:00:05.020,1:00:15.280
two slices of bread, some steaks, and a little bit of cheese without any vegetables or (?)

1:00:16.270,1:00:27.420
That's so funny. Yeah, I wanted to make some change. And so I went to Montgomery College to improve my English. And

1:00:27.940,1:00:37.030
Yeah, that's just why I went there, and I really enjoyed your class, which is ELAI 990.

1:00:37.060,1:00:39.090

1:00:41.040,1:00:47.580
So the most enjoyable part for me was writing essays

1:00:48.420,1:00:56.650
For me, it was not only practicing my writing skills but also

1:00:57.800,1:01:00.630
like self-reflection, because the topics

1:01:00.760,1:01:05.780
you chose were meaningful topics

1:01:05.840,1:01:18.050
We talked about the social justice like stereotypes

1:01:18.480,1:01:23.120
So I enjoyed doing them. And

1:01:23.420,1:01:31.730
so after that course I felt much more confident about my English

1:01:32.120,1:01:33.550
and I

1:01:37.090,1:01:45.090
understand more about society, I mean in the United States. Yeah. So

1:01:45.320,1:01:54.840
the four-month experience was very important to to me, to my new life here.

1:01:55.330,1:02:05.290
I remember that I really enjoyed reading your essays. You had a lot of interesting ideas to share. So that makes me happy to hear that.

1:02:06.860,1:02:13.570
I think, if I remember correctly, you also used some other resources at Montgomery College like

1:02:13.910,1:02:17.590
speech coaching, if I remember correctly.

1:02:17.900,1:02:19.680
Yeah. Professor Mac. (Prof. McWilliams)

1:02:19.830,1:02:27.250
Tell me about that.

1:02:27.350,1:02:32.950
Yes, I mean like some were your recommendation, right? And

1:02:33.360,1:02:35.260

1:02:35.620,1:02:40.910
That's what topic is like. We do essays or something?

1:02:40.940,1:02:44.940
Yeah, we do essay. Yeah. I...

1:02:46.120,1:02:59.240
I reached out to Professor Mac, and got help from her, and I learned a lot from her about my you know, like a

1:03:02.740,1:03:06.900
speech skills in English setting

1:03:08.400,1:03:16.250
yeah, and I kept practicing after the video essay, and one of the most valuable skills

1:03:16.430,1:03:18.590
she taught me was that

1:03:20.560,1:03:25.140
reading is the best way to correct

1:03:26.160,1:03:27.370
your essay.

1:03:27.400,1:03:32.250
Yeah. So I am still using this. You learned

1:03:32.460,1:03:37.280
to read it out loud. Yeah, I read a lot.

1:03:38.250,1:03:42.820
And that helps you with proofreading and editing and locating errors.

1:03:42.990,1:03:45.520
Yeah, sure. Yeah, Pretty helpful.

1:03:46.640,1:03:53.380
Were there any other resources you used when you were at the college like the Writing Center or the library?

1:03:55.840,1:03:58.830
I got a lot of help from Writing Center.

1:03:59.540,1:04:05.860
And people there were very professional and very helpful.

1:04:06.020,1:04:09.100
Because I

1:04:09.470,1:04:24.140
decided to apply for a graduate program in the US. So you know, they always require a lot of application essays. And I needed help with that

1:04:24.240,1:04:30.080
And so I made a lot appointments. I think I

1:04:31.180,1:04:43.530
made over 40, or at least 30 appointments with people in the Writing Center

1:04:44.010,1:04:48.300
Mostly in Rockville campus

1:04:48.380,1:04:57.450
Once I went to the Germantown campus to get help with my essays, yeah.

1:04:57.810,1:05:01.290
And you were accepted into a graduate program, right?

1:05:01.650,1:05:07.000
Yeah. But I'm still waiting for, you know, like, some programs, like final decision..

1:05:07.870,1:05:10.100

1:05:10.880,1:05:22.310
Keep us posted on what happens. What advice would you give to a new student at Montgomery College?

1:05:22.380,1:05:24.490

1:05:24.570,1:05:31.870
After I went to MC, I found most of my classmates, were

1:05:32.180,1:05:35.150
much younger than than me.

1:05:37.700,1:05:44.740
I don't know. I mean you, you know, like

1:05:44.890,1:05:48.730
I try to imagine what otherwise

1:05:49.420,1:05:51.760
what good advice I can you

1:05:52.880,1:05:55.000
to the listener of this video.

1:05:56.990,1:05:58.270
Hmm.

1:06:01.800,1:06:04.940
I want to say this

1:06:07.490,1:06:14.350
to the listener, who is in their twenties or younger than twenties,

1:06:15.120,1:06:19.510
so I won't say I understand how you feel now.

1:06:20.180,1:06:27.770
and I understand that if I can travel back to my twenties.

1:06:28.510,1:06:32.230
I mean the same age as you, (if) someone showed up.

1:06:33.090,1:06:34.640
and they

1:06:34.760,1:06:48.700
they me a lot golden advice, I might think, don't push it. Don't tell me about that. I have my own life story, my ideas.

1:06:51.080,1:06:58.500
So I i'm not going to give you advice. I just want to tell you that everyone has only

1:06:59.160,1:07:01.440
one time to

1:07:04.780,1:07:07.820
you know spend their twenties.

1:07:08.830,1:07:12.050
Only one time it's been yeah, 30s.

1:07:12.120,1:07:13.060
I am

1:07:15.280,1:07:24.170
going to be in my forties a couple of years later, and I have a lot to regrets.

1:07:25.600,1:07:27.460
I hope

1:07:28.240,1:07:32.880
you can make most of your time and

1:07:33.150,1:07:36.640
do what you would like to do at same time.

1:07:37.680,1:07:42.780
Try to get feedback from people around you, from people who care about you

1:07:43.040,1:07:45.260
that can make me

1:07:45.470,1:07:50.490
make most of your time, and the final goal is to

1:07:50.880,1:08:00.670
experience a high quality of your life experience. We are in high quality in your 20s, your 30s, your 40s

1:08:00.680,1:08:04.910
Everyone has same, almost same amount of

1:08:05.100,1:08:07.390
time in this world

1:08:07.410,1:08:14.730
and our ending will be the same, will be death, but it's kind of sad. So

1:08:14.840,1:08:16.890
the meaningful part is experiencing things.

1:08:17.970,1:08:19.340

1:08:20.390,1:08:30.710
The meaningful part is experiencing things? Is that what you said.

1:08:31.050,1:08:33.029
What kind of experiences?

1:08:33.800,1:08:38.300
Experiencing means what you get.

1:08:38.560,1:08:41.580
What's your possession?

1:08:42.580,1:08:44.120
You will lose them.

1:08:44.420,1:08:49.060
But you won't lose your memory, you won't lose

1:08:50.020,1:08:51.800
your contribution

1:08:52.920,1:08:55.080
to this society.

1:08:55.319,1:09:06.729
You won't lose the sense of accomplishment when you help people. So you won't lose that. But you might lose your money.

1:09:07.330,1:09:08.850
You might lose your

1:09:09.990,1:09:12.529
apartment, your car.

1:09:13.580,1:09:14.149
.

1:09:15.750,1:09:23.930
That's really interesting and insightful. You mentioned that you had some regrets. What regrets do you have?

1:09:26.439,1:09:31.630
My regrets? I wasted time.

1:09:33.000,1:09:37.109
I wasted time when I was young.

1:09:39.350,1:09:42.350
As we talked about, about my

1:09:42.580,1:09:46.460
accomplishments, that I choose, right.

1:09:47.160,1:09:48.680
and

1:09:49.700,1:09:56.220
I stayed in my comfort zone for many years after I made money.

1:09:57.870,1:10:03.300
I sat in my apartment, nice apartments. I drove my fancy car.

1:10:07.420,1:10:08.990
So I wasted time

1:10:09.320,1:10:14.530
staying in my comfort zone for a long time.

1:10:14.550,1:10:16.290
I stopped growing.

1:10:16.500,1:10:19.030
I stopped experiencing

1:10:19.220,1:10:23.660
this world. That's my biggest

1:10:24.460,1:10:26.460
regret about the past.

1:10:27.140,1:10:27.780

1:10:29.030,1:10:43.380

It sounds like you came to the realization that buying things didn't make you happy. But being with people and making a difference in your community, was what really brought you happiness? Is that

1:10:43.650,1:10:49.420
the correct way to say...

1:10:49.860,1:11:04.300

Yeah, that's correct. Some possessions can be taken away like your money or your fancy cars, you know, like some fancy clothes, but some things couldn't be

1:11:04.520,1:11:05.700
taken away.

1:11:07.450,1:11:09.730
They are the meaningful thing

1:11:09.960,1:11:13.360
you do to ourselves

1:11:13.380,1:11:18.850
and for your community, I mean

1:11:19.080,1:11:33.270

The number one thing you can do is getting education to open your eyes, to make you more

1:11:34.100,1:11:39.250
awareness of your inner self and the outside world.

1:11:41.200,1:11:48.060

A lot of students I've interviewed for this project have talked about the idea of "home."

1:11:48.090,1:11:54.000

What is home? Is home where you grew up? Is home where you live now?

1:11:54.110,1:11:57.330

Do you feel like you're at home now in Rockville?

1:11:58.370,1:11:58.960
Hmm.

1:12:04.360,1:12:08.990

Oh, yeah, I need to take time to think about it.

1:12:09.000,1:12:10.090

Rockville.

1:12:20.170,1:12:26.240

So in my opinion, home produces the sense of security.

1:12:26.790,1:12:27.900

1:12:28.350,1:12:33.400

So yeah, I think Rockville is my home, and the village is my home

1:12:33.570,1:12:38.090

and Beijing, where I lived for many years,

1:12:38.100,1:12:40.150

in my home, too,

1:12:40.720,1:12:45.310

because I can feel a sense of security. Yeah.

1:12:45.900,1:12:47.490

You have three homes.

1:12:47.880,1:12:53.840

Yeah, I have three homes, and I might have more homes

1:12:55.050,1:12:56.040
So

1:12:56.490,1:12:59.500
I feel

1:13:00.990,1:13:04.140
now I am more tolerant

1:13:04.700,1:13:07.210
to location

1:13:10.340,1:13:16.270
because I can find the sense of security. Maybe the security

1:13:16.440,1:13:20.680
I give it to myself or

1:13:20.920,1:13:28.500
You know my family members, my wife, or my friends, my parents, give me that I don't know

1:13:29.530,1:13:36.810
the truth. Only thing I know is I am more tolerant to the location.

1:13:38.240,1:13:38.980

1:13:39.730,1:13:42.840
Where do you see yourself in five years?

1:13:48.350,1:13:53.650
It's tough. I know if we, if you, talk about the location

1:13:54.580,1:14:00.440
for me, it's not a big deal. but in five years I hope

1:14:01.500,1:14:02.510
I

1:14:02.820,1:14:06.180
will be doing a very meaningful job

1:14:06.800,1:14:11.660
not for money but for

1:14:17.840,1:14:28.680
for the contribution I can do to people around me, and in five years I will feel

1:14:29.940,1:14:31.950
I'm tired

1:14:33.210,1:14:36.830
of doing that job. I feel

1:14:37.150,1:14:40.290
meaningful every day about what

1:14:40.470,1:14:41.810
I will be doing.

1:14:42.260,1:14:45.560
Yeah, that's my wishes.

1:14:46.210,1:14:57.300
I think you said a couple of interesting, well, many interesting things during this interview,
but one idea I want to come back to is this idea of time.

1:14:58.260,1:15:11.150

The limits of time, right, and that you mentioned that you felt like you were an older student in the class, which I think is interesting because you took a class, if I remember correctly in the afternoon, but my students in the

1:15:11.200,1:15:23.150
evening classes are often older than you. So if you had been that class in the evening, you might have felt young, or you might have felt like you were with your peers.

1:15:23.710,1:15:29.620
So what I'm thinking about is, this idea of how it takes time in life

1:15:29.670,1:15:33.770
to figure out what we want to figure out what makes us happy.

1:15:34.320,1:15:37.070
It takes time to reach our goals.

1:15:37.780,1:15:39.230
And we can't

1:15:42.030,1:15:50.050
really have insight into what we truly want until we've tried different things. Maybe we've tried different

1:15:50.770,1:15:56.200
types of jobs or living in different places, and so it's very hard to

1:15:57.320,1:16:02.660
to know sometimes. Am I on the right path? Am I going in the right direction?

1:16:02.680,1:16:06.610
So this is a very long way of asking you

1:16:06.900,1:16:19.630
when things felt challenging, when you felt like you had obstacles, or you felt like, oh, my gosh! I'm this age, I haven't reached the goal that I wanted to yet, I want to go in a different direction,

1:16:19.700,1:16:29.450
what helped you in those challenging times? Like what gave you hope or strength to find the energy to

1:16:29.710,1:16:38.720
go back to graduate school or to try living in a new place or to try to reach your next career goal? What helped you? What motivated you?

1:16:39.770,1:16:42.620
What motivated me?

1:16:44.630,1:16:48.580
Oh, or how I make those decisions?

1:16:49.780,1:17:00.950
Either way or both? I'm just curious what sustains people when they're faced with really tough challenges.

1:17:00.960,1:17:06.060
For you, what sustained you or gave you energy to keep going?

1:17:06.690,1:17:07.300
Hmm.

1:17:09.730,1:17:11.590
Yeah.

1:17:13.460,1:17:15.770
I think the first thing is

1:17:16.560,1:17:24.780
what I talked about. I want to experience more about this world and during this process, I can

1:17:24.830,1:17:29.590
explore my inner self. That's very important to me.

1:17:30.120,1:17:31.130

1:17:31.160,1:17:36.730
I don't want a result. I just want a process.

1:17:36.780,1:17:42.230
Right? Oh, that's the number one reason, and the number two reason is that

1:17:44.940,1:17:47.840
When I face very

1:17:48.010,1:17:50.180
tough decision

1:17:50.760,1:17:52.330
that I need to make,

1:17:55.220,1:18:07.550
I think about what I own now, and I own a house, I own a family,

1:18:07.690,1:18:11.930
right? And so

1:18:13.630,1:18:26.530
they are the most important thing to me. I won't lose them. So all the degree for salary. Why don't, I

1:18:26.690,1:18:31.230
just go to try my best, and

1:18:31.440,1:18:37.110
I see them as a like NBA game. Right?

1:18:41.450,1:18:42.800
Yeah. So that

1:18:42.960,1:18:48.960
that's how I made the decision and motivated

1:18:49.050,1:18:50.810
myself.

1:18:51.670,1:19:02.970
Some of the students that I have interviewed have talked about how religious faith or spirituality, different spiritual practices, maybe

1:19:03.050,1:19:09.100
prayer or meditation, or belonging to a spiritual community,

1:19:10.240,1:19:15.990
was beneficial to them and meaningful to them. Has that been your experience?

1:19:16.730,1:19:27.970
My experience is different. I don't have a religion. So I have to help myself, not ask for help from God

1:19:28.060,1:19:31.470
but kind of similar,

1:19:33.250,1:19:34.160
I

1:19:34.300,1:19:44.840
I sometimes, I imagine. I stayed in the sky and looked down at myself or looked down at this world

1:19:44.930,1:19:45.910

so

1:19:48.430,1:19:59.260
that makes me... It's not a big deal. It's a challenge; it's not a big deal. Right? Look at the big picture of your life.

1:20:00.300,1:20:08.310
So everything will be fine. Just do it just in your experience in this world.

1:20:08.500,1:20:09.170

1:20:09.700,1:20:22.550
When you were a student in my class, you shared some photographs with me of you in the outdoors. I think you were in the mountains. Is being in nature important to you?

1:20:23.400,1:20:33.870
Oh, yeah, it's very important to me. Especially, I spent too more time in one big city in this world, Beijing.

1:20:37.220,1:20:38.390

1:20:38.860,1:20:43.990
When people are in big cities

1:20:44.090,1:20:48.240
or are struggling with their work,

1:20:50.010,1:20:54.480
it's easy for them to

1:20:57.620,1:20:59.920
to forget what they want.

1:21:01.320,1:21:07.820
That's why being in the wild is important to me because I can get rid of all

1:21:09.090,1:21:17.210
those worries about my work, about my, you know, like professional life.

1:21:17.530,1:21:21.240
I can empty myself, and

1:21:21.640,1:21:23.490
get refreshed

1:21:24.470,1:21:29.550
and think over again. Think over about what's

1:21:29.920,1:21:36.850
important to me. Yeah. So I highly recommend this and

1:21:37.360,1:21:45.910
to go to the wild regularly, maybe walking in a park or hiking.

1:21:45.950,1:21:48.130
Or fly into

1:21:48.200,1:21:55.120
a strange place to get refreshed yourself. That's very important.

1:21:55.170,1:22:06.680
Are there any natural places here in Maryland that are important to you where you go to be in nature? Like are there any gardens or parks where you

1:22:06.750,1:22:10.210
to talk or go hiking?

1:22:13.050,1:22:15.580
Yeah, Last of mine I went to Greece for.

1:22:15.990,1:22:21.120
Yeah, I do great for that. That's that's very useful. And

1:22:21.210,1:22:30.890
I also help on always team. maybe top 10 national parks in the US.

1:22:31.260,1:22:35.290
Yeah, like Yellowstone, you 70, the kind

1:22:35.520,1:22:40.520
have you already been? Have you already been to some of those parks, or you hope to go there in the future?

1:22:40.580,1:22:42.630
I hope, I want to go there.

1:22:42.750,1:22:46.670
Yeah, I haven't come to any of

1:22:47.340,1:22:50.090
you know the national parks with big names

1:22:51.100,1:22:58.200
Shenandoah is not that far from here? So you should maybe go there. If you get an opportunity, you can drive there.

1:22:58.420,1:23:05.800
Yeah, maybe no, but not in in rush. No, I have not made a priority.

1:23:06.550,1:23:20.280
How do you feel about telling your story today? What emotions are you feeling as you describe memories from your childhood, and as you think about changes that you've experienced in your life, what are you feeling right now?

1:23:20.500,1:23:21.120
Hmm.

1:23:21.780,1:23:25.780
I enjoyed this interview.

1:23:25.910,1:23:27.550
Let me think about...

1:23:27.650,1:23:30.040
my story might

1:23:30.150,1:23:35.990
make impact to you, impact on some listeners.

1:23:36.620,1:23:40.550
and if they saw, it makes me feel very, very happy.

1:23:40.800,1:23:43.080

1:23:43.510,1:23:48.970
I also feel good about sharing my stories, my past.

1:23:49.040,1:23:59.330
my motivations. Yeah. I think this kind of thorough giving out really makes me feel very good.

1:24:00.730,1:24:05.170
Is there anything else that you would like to add today to the conversation?

1:24:05.810,1:24:06.420
Hmm.

1:24:08.340,1:24:12.080
Yeah, yeah, I think that's it. Yes, it is.

1:24:14.090,1:24:31.560

Well, I always enjoyed reading your essays when you were in my class, and I enjoyed your contributions to class conversation. So I'm really happy we had the chance today to continue talking. It's it's been very interesting, very insightful. Thank you so much for your time, Clark.

1:24:32.320,1:24:35.470

Thank you. Thank you, Professor. Thank you for this opportunity.

1:24:37.700,1:24:38.200