

**Interview with David ("Dave") Mike Legrand on May 1, 2023**

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Good afternoon, Dave. So nice to see you.

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How are you today?

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Good afternoon, Heather, and I'm doing good. How are you doing?

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I'm doing well. I'm really happy to have the chance to talk to you today.

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So thank you. I'm just going to begin by reading your bio, and then I'll give a little introduction about the project and then we'll begin.

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Okay. Sounds good.

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Okay. Great. I am reading from another screen. That's why I keep looking back and forth.

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Here's your bio. David Mike Legrand, who prefers to be called Dave Legrand, was born in 1995 in Haiti, and now lives with his family in Adelphi, Maryland.

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He speaks French, Kreyol, (Haitian Creole), and English. He moved to the United States in 2017. He studied studio arts at Montgomery College, and transferred to Cornell in 2020. Dave is completing his BFA in fine arts at Cornell University, and will

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graduate in May of 2023. Congratulations! And he will start his MFA

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at RISD, Rhode Island School of Design, in the fall of 2023. That's a big deal.

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Thank you.

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Congratulations! In his spare time he enjoys researching new francophone writers and drawing. All right.

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Well, thank you so much. Let me give a little intro of the project that I'm working on.

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My name is Heather Bruce Satrom. I teach in ELAP, English Language for Academic Purposes at Montgomery College.

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This project is called History In the Making: Documenting Stories of Immigrant and Refugee Students at MC, and the goal is to help others better understand the experiences of immigrants and refugees in the United States.

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So telling your story will enable others to better understand the challenges that immigrants face, and better appreciate the resilience and perseverance of people in your community.

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I am grateful for your participation. You had a chance to read the questions in advance, but please note that all of the questions are optional, and if you want to skip a question that's fine, we can move ahead. If you need a break that's fine,

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too. We'll talk for about an hour. Today is Monday.

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May 1st, 2023. It's about 5 p.m.

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Could you please tell me your full name?

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Oh, my full name is David Michael Legrand.

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Yes.

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And do I have permission to record this interview? Thank you.

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All right. You are about to graduate with a degree from Cornell, an Ivy League Institution, and you're going to continue your studies at RISD, one of the most prestigious art schools in the United States.

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How does that feel?

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Well, honestly, it's unbelievable, because I've been having been the ups and downs, because I just couldn't believe it.

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I remember back in Haiti, I have a cousin of mine.

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We used to make plans about attending the top schools in the world, and seeing that near completing my, you know, my degree is just

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I mean I made it, but at the same time I still cannot believe it.

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You know, and also the fact that I'm transferring, I'm graduating.

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And then doing my MFA at another top school, you know, art school in the world, is something that even my professors complimented me, and when they were doing so, I still couldn't believe it. No it's something that you should be proud of but this.

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It's a very big accomplishment for sure.

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But at the same time I just connected understand? Like, how big is it until this sat me down and like talked me through like what it takes to graduate from a top university, Cornell, and then transfer to another school where people would usually take a year or two, that gap year before they start...

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You must know. Fantastic!

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everything. So yeah, I'm just happy and yeah, definitely.

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So tell me a little bit about your art. I know that you work with different media, that you do painting and sculpture, and drawing.

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Yes.

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Is that right? Yeah. So tell me a little bit about it.

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Like when I start like drawing. Oh, that was like back in 2016, it was mostly drawing, one of the reasons why is because the art materials in Haiti, were kind of expensive

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So I had to figure out a way to keep pushing my practice.

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So it was mostly drawing, but after I transferred here I was like, oh, for opportunities to explore and expand the practice.

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So I ended up trying out painting, and then sculpture, which, I keep doing right now.

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Do do you identify as a Haitian- American artist?

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And if so, what does that mean to you?

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Oh, that's a good question. But no, I do not.

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Unfortunately, one of the reasons why is because I do not have American citizenship.

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So I identify myself as Haitian.

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And tell me when you we're growing up, when did you first realize that you really loved art?

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Well, that's also a funny, funny story, because I think, even though I grew up around, people were making art.

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My dad, my uncle, I also had one of my aunts making arts.

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I was not really trying to wait until, like years later, it's like 2016, late 2016.

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But at this same time I cannot forget, the influence that I had from those people.

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You know, even though I was not practicing it, and observing and appreciating, or contributing to what I've been doing lately as an artist. So.

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So it sounds like you grew up in a very creative and artistic family.

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Lots of artists.

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Yeah, artists, writers and also librarians.

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That's great. I love that. Are you familiar with the artwork of Titus Kaphar?

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Actually, I do. I came across him, I think, in 2021.

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During a create that I was having and one of the professors, told me that.

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Well seeing the kind of, part that you are making in the subject matter that you are trying to treat.

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This is an artist that I feel would be beneficial to your practice and also to your discourse about, as a Black student, and also as a Black artist.

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And yeah, and I just love, there's one of his works that I really love, "The fight for remembrance" and I don't know.

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There's something about this work that really moves me as a as an artist.

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And yeah, I keep looking back at them, even though I'm exploring order.

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Subject matter in my participants.

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I'll include a link later to to an image of that

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So that people who are watching this video can see it. What is it about that artwork in particular that you find particularly interesting or moving?

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I've been the kind of work that I've been making has a lot to do with memory.

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But at the same time, I have to acknowledge that memory can be faulty.

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It's not everything that you remember. It's not because you remember something that it is accurate.

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So my work is to revisit places or stories, and then try to put them in the context

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that they were in and this wor, this artist Titus (Kaphar) is, I feel he's doing something similar in that.

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With the title of "Fight for Remembrance"

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That makes sense. And the reason I ask you is in one of my classes.

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We listen to a Ted Talk by Titus Kaphar, who's not Haitian,

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He's African-American, and the name of the talk is, "Can art amend history?"

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And it has to do with public art, public monuments, and I feel like in the past few years, especially with Black Lives Matter,

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There's been a real reckoning with public monuments, and who is represented in public art.

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And I also ask because Kaphar is based in New England

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now, I think, in New Haven, Connecticut. So I was curious

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If his ideas resonated with you, he's got another TED talk titled

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"Can beauty open our hearts to difficult conversations?" and I think it's such an important question about art.

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And is that important to you, opening to difficult conversation?

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Definitely. But it was not always the case because even though we're dealing with a similar situation in Haiti, but it was not as (?), but coming here like completely changed how I see like things.

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And also my environment. And also the way I approach my art.

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And I said, like making work that would like spark conversation with other people, even though sometimes they might not have any interest in talking about it.

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At least that could be like a conversation starter somehow.

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That makes sense. Thank you. Yeah, interesting. Alright, let's go back to

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to the beginning, where and when were you born?

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And tell me a little bit about the place where you were born, and about your neighborhood and community.

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I was born in Port-au-Prince Haiti in 1995, and hey, I think around like when it was 3 we moved to Petite Rivière de l'Artibonite, that's where I grew up in.

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So you're going to school, and honestly, it was a vibrant community, I mean, yeah, we had, you know, problems and stuff.

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But I had a relatively good life compared to other people, and I learned, so much because the community was particularly interested in growing stuff, there was not a lot of technology, we were more interested in books.

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So I grew up with a lot of books or reading was a big part in of my childhood.

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That's why I keep like, it's like the habit of my day, you know.

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Carry around and and I incorporate in my practice as well.

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But yeah, I used to go to rice fields with my grandma.

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I used to take part in harvest season, you know, when the garden is still you know, harvesting stuff.

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And it's like such a.

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Like at the time. I did not understand, like what it meant.

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Like to take part in stuff like that. But now that I'm really far away

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And I'm looking back at it, I'm realizing how it was at the time to take part in such a practice that brings people together, you know, even though it was a small part of like the year.

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But still.

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Do you think that growing up with being close to the natural world, the way you described, and without a lot of technology, that that helped you to be more creative or to be more connected to your community?

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Honestly yes because at the time we didn't have phones

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We had TVs and stuff like that. But it was like practice, where, even though you had it, you would invite your friends over to watch a movie.

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Well, I just came across this movie. Do you want to watch it together?

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You know, it's this kind of practice. I have the TV and my friends are bringing snacks, and someone else is bringing juice or lemonade, it's like it's even though technology was part of it

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there was like this practice of getting together because we wanted that. You know that time, not like this practice of where you are just by yourself and doing things on your own.

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Yeah, absolutely. Is it hard to have those kinds of experiences in American culture?

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Honestly, yeah, what? For many reasons, at least from my personal experience, like, I feel like.

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The American culture is a fast-paced environment, like everyone is always on the go, and we cannot judge them.

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You know it's not their fault. It's just how the system is.

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But in Haiti it was more slow like you know, a slow-paced

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environment. So even though it's difficult but some people when

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it's like when you want to spend time with them,

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You just make time, even though you know that you're busy.

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But that's also part of this idea of getting together with people. You know.

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Do you think the slower pace helps cultivate creativity, and it helps artists?

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Honestly, yes, it has it' good side because there are worries that you do not have, and once you do not have those kind of things, you have more like room to foster other thoughts, you know, and also think more openly about what the next step is, not

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because it's coming fast but because it's something that you're looking forward to

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Yeah, that makes sense. You mentioned that there are librarians in your family, and the books were important to you, growing up.

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Are there any Haitian writers that are particularly important to you?

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I'm thinking of for example, Edwidge Danticat, I don't know if there are others, or if her work is important to you.

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Are there any writers you want to mention that have influenced your thinking

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or that are important to you?

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Well, there are quite a few and one of them, he's a contemporary Haitian writer, who's living in France, his name is

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Makenzy Orcel, and he's been making a wave with his last book called "Une somme humaine." And I have read all of his books, and the way he's describing Haitian

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culture, and how he's bringing it to the front of the international scene is like really interesting to me, because, you know, we've been neglected, even though we're brought up when it's convenient.

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But at the same time neglected. But the way that he's like bringing back and people are like they have no choice

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But to face it is something that I'm really proud of. So, yeah, I love him.

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I'll include a link to his work as well.

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Something that fascinates me is Haitian Kreyol, and I've had the opportunity to attend a few programs and lectures at Montgomery College.

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to learn more about this language, that I think for a long time was considered to be more like a dialect.

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But now there's more acknowledgement of how rich a language it is, with its grammar and vocabulary, and rules, and I think it's really interesting that recently, last year The New York Times ran this series of articles about the history of colonization in

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Haiti, and they published it in English, French, and Kreyol.

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If I remember this correctly, and I think that that probably was the first time that The New York Times had published in this language, and which made it accessible

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So many more people to learn about this history, and so that's a very long way of asking this question about language and could you talk a little bit about what language you spoke growing up?

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What language you spoke in school, and your feelings about Kreyol?

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That's also another difficult question, because I spoke both Kreyol and French.

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But.

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That dynamic between Haitian Kreyol and French it's kind of complicated in Haiti because the majority of the population speaks Kreyol.

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But the language of instruction and administrative is French.

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There's this dynamic where if you go

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to, I don't know a public institution where you're trying to get help,

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You might get looked down on, or rejected somehow, if you address the reception is, or whoever is trying to help you in Kreyol.

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But they will be more inclined to help you if it's in French

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Or if it's in any other foreign language. Yeah.

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So in a way, French is kind of a barrier to separate the people from the...

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Exactly, even though we're like in the same community, if you speak French, you will be taken more seriously somehow.

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So did you, when you were growing up in your family, did you speak Kreyol?

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And then at school, you learned French?

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It was like I didn't have that problem because my family we spoke both Kreyol and French, so it was not a problem for me.

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Until later when I started thinking about it

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That was in high school, I had this talk with one of my professors, who was an anthropologist, and then he was explaining to me that dynamic, because at some point I was interested in culture and if he

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wanted to at least initiate us to this dynamic between

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Haitian Kreyol and French as language, as official language of Haiti.

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Interesting. I'm interested to know about how you feel about how Haiti is depicted

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sometimes in the media. I think that often when people hear about Haiti, there are images of the earthquake or poverty.

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And do you feel in a way that kind of image in the media creates stereotypes about who Hitians are?



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Oh, definitely and

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I said it, and I'll keep saying it, like the media they

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show what works best for them, and when it comes to representing Haiti

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they like talk about history. Why is that convenient for them?

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They show, like the earthquake, because it's convenient for them.

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They show poverty because it's convenient for them. I'm not saying that those are not part of Haiti.

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They're also part of Haiti. But at the same time, there are other sides that also represent Haiti.

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But they do not show those kind of things like why?

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That's also a question that I keep asking myself and asking other people if they have the the answers.

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Being a Haitian, do you feel like sometimes people stereotype you?

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And do you feel as an artist, you have an opportunity to maybe portray Haiti in a different way

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that people don't usually see?

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Well, definitely and at the same time, I do not

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I forgot his name, but there's this artist that I really love, and he had an interview recently, and he was talking about his experience as an artist, and one thing that he said was that when they're referring to him, they do not say "an artist," they say "a Black artist."

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He said, yes, I am an artist, and I paint

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the Black experience, but that does not necessarily like make me a Black artist.

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Oh! Why is it that when a White person or White artist is making art, they do not refer to that person as a white artist, you know, and it's like I feel the same with that level of like "Haitian artist." I'm an artist.

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Where do I go? Whether I go, whether I'm living in Haiti

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Or whether I'm living in the United States or somewhere else, you know, like or...

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I think Georgia O'Keefe had a similar take on that.

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She's like, why do they have to call me a woman artist?

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Exactly. You know.

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Just like more than that, right? Like being a woman

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Of course, it's important to her identity, but it would.

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She's like, I'm just so much more than this one...

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a woman

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Yeah, that's really interesting. Yeah, I think in the United States, we often do that

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as a way to, I don't know, express our roots or culture, but sometimes, perhaps, it can be a bit limiting if you're put into boxes.

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Yeah.

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Yeah, I see that, that's interesting. Let's go back a little bit.

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Talk about like when you were growing up. Tell me a little bit about your family. You mentioned your grandmother was important to you.

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Yeah, sweet old lady, and yeah, like growing up.

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She used to be what people would call a street vendor because at the time we didn't have the facility to have a proper place for her to have her stuff, but it was at the same time it's also a big part of the Haitian

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culture, you know, even though some people even do, they have the proper facilities at some point. They're still attached to this lifestyle of going around streets and just selling stuff, you know. And there's this big

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cultural practice, and those people, we call them "Madan Sara" and those people

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basically women, and also like some men. So basically, they work

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from the still dawn and the next day they'll still keep doing the same thing.

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They eat and are still working. They sometimes stop along the way to shower and then be on the way, and I feel like at some point, even though my grandma didn't do all that thing.

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But she is definitely part of like that category of these women.

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Were doing everything that they can to take care of their family and when I say thinking back about those moments, I just feel I just realized how lucky I am that I had someone to take care of my mom, guiding her.

0:25:19.000,0:25:29.000  
And now she's doing the same thing for me, you know, and that's also the start of my project for the past three years.

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Tell me more about that.

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Oh, so, yeah. The project it's called, if our places and also which is like those people that I'm trying to at least acknowledge.

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You know. And basically, if I'm wrong, place is this project where, like, I'm trying to. Sometimes when I go back to Haiti, I take pictures of like those places that my grandma told me about, or I have seen for myself. And.

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From the stories in the detail that I get. I'm trying to reconstruct those places and place those people back in those places, because those places they have a sentimental attachment to those places, and not just them, but also to me.

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You know, because they influenced the way that I was growing.

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And yeah, that's the dynamic. It's a window. It's like a memory.

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And also

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Yeah. Sorry. To open.

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When you talk about your grandmother and the values that she passed on to your mom and the values that your mom passed on to you,

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This idea of taking care of your family, and it sounds like you're talking about hard work and and caring for people.

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What sort of values do you think were really important to your grandmother

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and mother to teach you?

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One thing that I, was like, growing up is that

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Love is important

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But at the same time, if you have, even if you do not love someone, if you respect them, we can start something.

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So I see respect as like this space, where, even though there is no love, we can start a conversation.

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We can build something side by side, because I know where my limits are, and you also know where your limits are, and we can still live side by side without bothering each other, without like infringing into each other's space.

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You know, and that's something that I carry around, no matter where I go, is that if you respect me, I respect you, and from there we can

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start moving forward.

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That kind of respectful dialogue could be really helpful to improving American culture, I think.

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That's my personal take. I feel like most of the time, people

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They're just like trying to put their ideas out there but they do not take the time to listen to what the other party is saying.

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You know.

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Yeah. Slowing down and listening is important.

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It's also part of like I allow you the time to talk, and I listen to what you have to say and that's the basic level of respect.

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you can like show to someone is that they took the time to listen to you.

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The reciprocity is also doing the same.

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That's beautiful. Is your grandmother still around?

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Does she know about your success?

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Yeah, she actually just celebrated her birthday on April 29th.

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She turned, I think, 94.

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She also goes along with my mom, my sister.

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Oh, wow! And does she live in Maryland now? Your mom, your sister, and your grandmother are all in Adelphi?

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And my little brother. Yeah.

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Your brother. Okay. So what situation or conditions led your family to relocate to Maryland?

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That's a good question, because my grandma, she came here

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I think, 2 or 3 months after I was born, and she always wanted my mom to be by her side.

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But my mom, she at the time she was working as a teacher, and she really loved her job and she didn't want us to just leave everything behind.

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And you know, move somewhere else. But at some point after the earthquake in 2010,

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She started taking like the idea more seriously. But she wanted us to finish high school at least first before we can.

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actually, you know, moved. And yeah, even after after, I graduated high school in 2014.

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I was working. I was helping in a library. I was doing other stuff, and up, I think, 2015.

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I was admitted into the public university in Haiti as well, but she didn't tell us

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until 2017 before, a few months before we left that we're going to be leaving and go somewhere else, and start anew basically and honestly was, you already have a life, you've built a life somewhere and the fact

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that you had to leave all that behind, and start from scratch was not something that I was really looking forward to.

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But I guess it worked out somehow.

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So what emotions did you feel when you were told we're leaving Haiti?

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We're moving to Maryland, like what went through your head?

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I was confused, I was angry, I was happy, but I was sad, because even though it's difficult to make a life in Haiti, there's nothing better than home.

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I'm glad that I had the opportunity to like come here and now that I'm you know

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I was given opportunities to start here at Cornell, which is amazing and

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I'm going to RISD for my MFA. That's also amazing.

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But at the same time there's a part of me that is still left behind in Haiti, and it's like, even if I go back, I will not be able to get it back because a lot of things change.

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And I gained a lot of things here so.

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I guess I can still face it, but I do not see at least now how to reconcile it with that part of me that I left behind because from that moment that I left 'til now so many things happened. I grew and changed as a person.

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Yeah, I think it's interesting that you use the word home, because a lot of students I've been interviewing have talked about this. When I say home, what does that mean for you?

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Where is home?

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I guess I can call Haiti my home, but at the same time.

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wherever I have my family, I can also call that place my home.

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Because

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That's where I have memories that I cherish, people that I love.

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And that sense of security that I feel.

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Do you consider Maryland in a way to be your home too?

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I wouldn't say Maryland but my family.

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Okay, yeah, that makes sense. So when you first came here to the United States, I imagine that you had ideas in your head about what it would be like.

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And then there was the reality. I mean, we all have images of the United States from Hollywood movies and from pop culture and music.

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And how was it similar to, or different from, your preconceived ideas?

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Once you got here. What was the experience like?

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Hmm, that's interesting that you mentioned Hollywood movies

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and you know, pop culture. Of course I had, like those ideas, and about the American Dream and all that, but at the same time I feel like I was mature enough to know that

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it was not going to be like the way that it was portrayed.

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Yeah.

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And coming here, it was even more of a shocker because things were completely different, I started doing things that I was not used to.

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I was going to college and working at the same time, you know, helping my family, and what else and

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There's like this, the economy, Black and White, the Black community and police brutality and stuff like that.

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And looking at the reality in the face, was like, whoa, let's slow it down and absorb all that because it was like

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A lot of things to take all at once, but at the same time you didn't have time.

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I didn't have time to digest it all, and I had to keep moving.

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So, yeah.

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I think we're all still kind of digesting, the pandemic and there's been so many examples of police brutality.

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I mean, so many things have happened in the past few years, and but I think also about the past few years.

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I think about Temporary Protected Status for Haitians, which I think was taken away for a while, and then restored and you know I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about Temporary Protected Status.

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I mean, it's not a long-term guarantee of stability, right?

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But that's how a lot of Haitians have been able to come.

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Can you talk a little bit about the instability of a temporary type program to help Haitians?

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I was fortunate that I was not

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I didn't come here as a, for temporary status like, I'm living here as a permanent resident, but at the same time I had friends who went through the process, and I didn't live through it.

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But I could feel how scary it is to to be making plans and not know whether or not that they still stand

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The next day. So you had to live day by day. I live today, and I eat, tomorrow

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I wake up, nothing happened, and I'm grateful for it, you know.

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There's like it's a good opportunity. But at the same time you're being controlled by fear that tomorrow might not happen, and you might have to go back.

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somewhere that you left because you were trying to, you were looking for a better living condition.

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Better learning conditions.

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Right? Right? Yeah, I imagine that that lack of permanency could make it very hard to make long-term goals or to know how to plan one's future.

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Can you tell me a little bit about how you first heard about Montgomery College and your experience there?

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Like when I came here in 2017

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I was living with a cousin of mine at the time, and we're making plans to get an apartment, and start like doing things in how long

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And one thing that I was told before I even left Haiti,

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It was like three months prior, one of my uncles sat me down, and we're having like a man-to-man talk.

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They're like, well, you're going to a new place.

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There are things that will be a shocker. You will have good opportunities, and I know that you will grasp those opportunities.

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But at the same time there are things that you should be wary of, and you should be careful, like about those things.

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And one thing, that you should be doing first, because you are young, and you still have, a lot of time in front of us.

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Go to school because for people like us, our only way out is school.

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It's something that we value a lot in my family, because I had one of my uncles who built the first library in this part of Haiti so he was really adamant about the value of education, and that's also something that he

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passed on to me, and I wanted to make sure that I respect him.

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Well, he passed away a few years ago, but I wanted to respect the value that he put on education.

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And that's why I decided instead of keep working, then go to school and learn something, and afterwards you can see, you can make plans and see where things go.

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Can you talk a little bit about your experience at Montgomery College?

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The English language classes that you took, or the art classes that you took

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Do you have any memories of particular faculty members or classes, or resources that were particularly helpful to you?

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Yeah, honestly, I have so many great memories there, because actually learning English by myself, but at the same time, when I got there, I had to take the English test placement.

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And ended up with Professor Amanda (Lebleu) and it was such an amazing class honestly, and I remember that

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One paper that I wrote about, what artists can do to influence society, and she loved it, and that's a memory that I cherish, because, you know, as you're like learning a new language

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Yeah, it was challenging. But the fact that I was able to connect with those people even though at the time my English was lacking

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It's something that I will keep cherishing and those people serve as a base for me to be where I am right now.

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So English is definitely, that class is definitely memorable.

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And I also had memories with Prof. Katherine (Knight), Prof. Kevin (Bowman), and Prof. Kate (Kretz)

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for my drawing class, honestly, because those people, as I say, they serve as basis for me to be what I am right now. I took English class, and my English needed to be college-level, which I didn't know, to be college level, there's like college-level English. They provided me

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with what I needed, the knowledge that I needed, my drawing.

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I needed to improve my skill. Those people helped me, somehow, they're like the ladder that I needed to be right where

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I am right now. Without them, I wouldn't be

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here, and it's something to be grateful for.

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Did you take drawing and painting and sculpture classes at MC?

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Yeah, I did. I did. And also like the sense of community that I had when I was at MC is something that I'm not just like grateful.

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It's something that I keep carrying with me and I'm proud to say that

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Well, actually, I transferred from a community college and it's not something that you see a lot here, a lot of transfer students from community college.

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They transfer from other four-year colleges

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And the fact that I'm not gonna say that I was an exception.

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I was one of those people who transferred from a community college.

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So one of the top schools in the country, that says a lot about the knowledge that I received from there.

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You know.

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Do you feel like there are stereotypes about community colleges?

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Oh, yeah, but I just do not pay any mind. First of all, I want to be here, if they thought that I was lacking, it's because they see something.

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in me, and the thing that they saw in me, it's not because I had... I was somewhere, and they provided me with the resources and knowledge that I needed, which pushed me to where I am right now, and I'm proud to say that

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Well, actually, yeah, I transferred from Montgomery College.

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And you know it's like this, like moments where you tell them, well, yeah, I transferred not, from you know.

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from a four-year college or anything like that

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0:43:56.000,0:44:25.000  
One thing also that I keep talking about, even with my friends, is the fact that one of the professors who reviewed my application for my admission at Cornell University, she still remembered me, like my name, and she told me that

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she wouldn't do something like that if there was not something, you know, in there, and that thing, as I said earlier, was not in me.

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As I came here, I transferred from somewhere and that somewhere is Montgomery College

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So I feel like they did a good job with preparing me for Cornell University.

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Was it a big change to go to school up north in such a cold environment?

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Honestly winters here are so harsh! But at the same time, like in the summer, it's really nice.

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And the fact that even though the temperature's really bad, you still have other people to complain with about the weather.

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That's true. Sometimes complaining can help.

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So tell me about transferring to, or sorry, applying to RISD.

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Tell me a little bit about that, and your plans going forward.

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Oh, I mean I knew even before coming to the States, I knew that I wanted to do advanced studies, but at the same time, I didn't have the proper knowledge of what is it specifically that I wanted to do so after MC

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some of my professors told me well, you can either go to an art school to keep developing your practice, or you can go to a university, where they have, like a more interdisciplinary practice.

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So I decided that I'm going to a university.

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Where they have interdisciplinary practice. So I wanted to not just develop my skills.

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But at the same time double up the knowledge that I have about my field, and they really did a good job preparing for that.

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I went through the process. And now it's this next step from undergrad to grad school.

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That one was stressing, but at the same time, so in preparing for it like a year in advance, since I was a junior, I started working on my portfolio, because, it's that common knowledge for undergrad students

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in art school not to be admitted into grad school, because they want you to have a year or two outside of school, accumulating life experience, and for them to see if you can sustain your practice.

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But some of my professors told me that well, actually, I have already seen that you can sustain your practice, and from what they told me, they're like

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Well, you're ready. It seems like you're ready

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to go to grad school, and that was the green light for me to

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go through like the application process. Yeah, I ended up applying for like seven schools

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I got into five of them, which they told me was amazing, for an undergrad to get.

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Congratulations!

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Thank you. And yeah, it was stressing, but also the fact that I had those people to guide in the process made it way easier compared to if I was doing it by myself.

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I'm sorry. Go ahead.

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That's also about like the people that I had the chance to meet.

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And how much they contribute to the person or the artist that I'm beginning to be.

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When you envision your future, say five years from now,

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What do you imagine or hope for?

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Not here, or like I when I was at MC? Or like right now?

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I think like right now, when you think about okay, five years in the future, do you manage yourself working as an artist in the States?

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Do you imagine going back to Haiti? Where do you imagine living?

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I don't know. Like in New York City or a city, that's more associated with the arts like, what do you hope for?

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Like five years from now. I'm hoping to, Obviously, I'll be completing my MFA

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And I will be working as an artist. But at the same time I want to

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I want to learn more about like conservation and restoration practices

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That's also something that I'm really interested in

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So I'm hoping that I will start accumulating proper knowledge

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maybe in school or like via work in a museum or like a private collection

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somehow, and as to where I will be living, I have not really thought about it, but

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I'm hoping it's going to be like a community which cherishes art as much as I do, and that you use, or see art as a way to open dialogue.

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Do you imagine doing any work with young people in Haiti who are interested in art, to encourage them?

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Yeah, definitely. That's also like a plan of mine to open an art center in Haiti.

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I mean, we do have quite a few, but the way that I want to see it is that this place where

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Like I'm giving opportunities to those people and they do not see it as just like a simple opportunity but they could see themselves giving opportunities to the next generation.

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It's like this practice where you go passing down the knowledge that you have.

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You have accumulated to the next generation.

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I like that. There's a poet named Clint Smith who talks about that.

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"How the word is passed" about the importance of, from one generation to another, and I'm really glad that you that you mentioned, like your grandmother and your mother and your uncle and to be a part of that,

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is a powerful thing. Do you have any advice for Montgomery College students?

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I would say, be bold. Do not limit yourself to what you think you can accomplish because you have things in you that you do not see, because you are the biggest critic of yourself, and you will critique yourself in the harshest way possible. Just do not mind that

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interest, like go for it, because that's what I did, you know I hoped for a bunch of schools, and I didn't know that was I going to get into any of that.

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But I just didn't let that keep me back

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Be bold. I love it.

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Just like, if you have something that you wanna do,

0:51:52.000,0:51:55.000

What are you thinking that you can accomplish or not? Just go for it

0:51:55.000,0:52:00.000  
You won't know until the final result is in front of you.

0:52:00.000,0:52:01.000

0:52:01.000,0:52:26.000  
I think that's excellent advice. Another question that I've been asking students in these interviews has to do with hope. And when you're going through a period of time where things are really challenging or stressful, or if you feel discouraged, what helps you get through those moments? What has sustained you?

0:52:26.000,0:52:38.000  
Oh, that's a good question, one thing that I often turn to is my family cause they have supported me for so long.

0:52:38.000,0:52:46.000  
I feel like it would be a letdown not to keep going as they're supporting me.

0:52:46.000,0:52:57.000  
At least I see it as being counterproductive, and also like those people, will believe that you accomplished something.

0:52:57.000,0:53:06.000  
Just do not, I, at least in my case, I do not see myself letting them down, because they see something in me

0:53:06.000,0:53:17.000  
they have helped me along the way, and they didn't do it, because, like they knew, that I was going to stop midway.

0:53:17.000,0:53:28.000  
You know they keep pushing me because they know that, I cannot just be where I am right now.

0:53:28.000,0:53:29.000

0:53:29.000,0:53:31.000  
But be like further than that, you know. Be more than what I think.

0:53:31.000,0:53:38.000  
I hope that your graduation ceremony that's coming up, that you'll take lots of pictures with your family and send them to me, and then I can include that.

0:53:38.000,0:53:39.000  
Oh, definitely.

0:53:39.000,0:53:46.000  
For people who watch this video to see to see some of these family members that you've mentioned. Is your grandmother going to be there?

0:53:46.000,0:53:56.000  
No, unfortunately, she cannot travel really far. So it's gonna be my mom, my little brother and my sister.

0:53:56.000,0:54:00.000  
They must be very, very proud of you. I have no doubt.

0:54:00.000,0:54:01.000

0:54:01.000,0:54:02.000  
So how do you feel right now? What emotions are you experiencing as you think about this conversation that we had

0:54:02.000,0:54:10.000  
and reflecting on all these memories?

0:54:10.000,0:54:19.000

Honestly, I'm feeling a little overwhelmed, and at the same time grateful that I had to talk about

0:54:19.000,0:54:32.000

all those things that I had in me, those feelings that were buried and I didn't have the opportunities to talk about them and it's kind of liberating to just like let all that out.

0:54:32.000,0:54:39.000

And the fact that someone else will be watching this and someone who might be in the same

0:54:39.000,0:54:53.000

situation, in a similar situation, would see it as this point that would like reboot themselves and keep pushing forward

0:54:53.000,0:55:02.000

Is something, I'm glad that could be helpful, but at the same time, I'm grateful for the opportunity.

0:55:02.000,0:55:03.000

Well, we're grateful for you taking the time during this very busy time in your life to share your story.

0:55:03.000,0:55:15.000

I really appreciate it. Is there anything else that you'd like to add to the conversation?

0:55:15.000,0:55:19.000

I don't know. It's just.

0:55:19.000,0:55:25.000

I think little moments where

0:55:25.000,0:55:31.000

things can be easy, just

0:55:31.000,0:55:36.000

Just like looking back and see how far you've come.

0:55:36.000,0:55:41.000

Like all the steps that you've taken to be where you are, and

0:55:41.000,0:55:44.000

Look at the goals that you have in front of you, and do not

0:55:44.000,0:55:58.000

look at them in the sense of goals, but the number of steps that you have like until you reach it, and then

0:55:58.000,0:56:11.000

make the next step. Do not think about the amount of steps that you have, but just see it as one step after the other...

0:56:11.000,0:56:12.000

0:56:12.000,0:56:21.000

That's actually a really lovely image to end our conversation on.

0:56:21.000,0:56:22.000

0:56:22.000,0:56:24.000

One step after the other on a journey. Thank you so much.

0:56:24.000,0:56:25.000

0:56:25.000,0:56:29.000