

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([00:01](#)):

Hello. Um, I'm gonna have the pleasure of interviewing Allison Hermosa. She is a fourth year at UC San Diego. And she is a sociology major with a minor in ethnic studies. Allison, do you consent for this interview to be recorded and be posted on the university website? If you decide you don't want to be on the website, you can also just say, I don't want it on the website and we will remove it any time that you feel you don't want. Is that something that you're comfortable with?

Allison Hermosa ([00:36](#)):

Yes, I consent.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([00:37](#)):

Okay. Perfect. Well, thank you so much, Allison. So please tell us, how are you doing today?

Allison Hermosa ([00:43](#)):

<laugh> I am doing good. I just finished taking my grad pictures this afternoon, so pretty excited to graduate.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([00:53](#)):

Okay. Well thank you. I'm so glad that you are graduating. <laugh> congrats. Class of 2022. Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself?

Allison Hermosa ([01:03](#)):

like my background?

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([01:05](#)):

Anything that you feel like you want to share?

Allison Hermosa ([01:08](#)):

Okay, well, I am a woman. I am a working class background. I am a daughter of immigrants. I am first generation college student, so no one in my family has ever been to college. what else? Yeah. <affirmative> because I am from a working class background. Most of my education happened in high schools that are from lower income communities. So that meant that my access to resources was very limited in terms of education, um, which I believe has affected me in higher education and UCSD and yeah.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([02:07](#)):

Um, thank you so much for sharing. And you are from San Diego, right? Can you describe which part of San Diego you are part of and your experience growing up?

Allison Hermosa ([02:17](#)):

Yeah, I was born and raised in San Diego, Southeast San Diego specifically. I'm from city Heights, which is like a community of immigrants. I went to Hoover high school, which is, I believe like first or one of the first or the top one or the top two school, most diverse schools in like California, I believe, according to some fucking website <laugh> I was told that by my boss as well. I mainly grew up like in city Heights,

but also in Sherman and Logan Heights. That's where like my grandma and my aunts lived. So most of my life I would go to school in city Heights. And then right after school, we'd go to visit my grandma before she passed away. And then during Halloween we'd like trick or treat in Sherman. So yeah, I've been around between like Sherman, Logan and city Heights, I would say.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez (03:28):

Thank you so much for sharing that. I just wanna ask you about your... Cause you mentioned that you feel like your high school education and your pre-college experience had a lot of impact in your education nowadays. Can you go a little more into your pre-college experience? Like maybe like where you feel more comfortable, like it can be from elementary, middle school or High school.

Allison Hermosa (03:51):

Yeah. So most of my education, I feel like I was made to feel like I had a future. I think it was often like... even like my parents often compared me to my siblings and I was always like the, the child that would get like good grades and I would like score high, highly, like in the standardized test, like the SATS and stuff. So I feel like a lot of my education, I felt like smart <laugh> or I felt very like school would come very easy to me but like looking back, I realized that most of the time that I was like in school, it wasn't very challenging. Like the education I would be receiving, it was mediocre. like I don't ever really remember, um, like even writing an essay when I was like in middle school up until I wrote one essay in sixth grade and then another essay eighth grade, which is where I, I remember after writing that essay in eighth grade about the Jamestown, whatever fucking colonies.

Allison Hermosa (05:06):

I remember my teacher like drilled us on that and I like based off my entire like high school, which I wrote like three other essays in my life and even taking AP English. I based like most of my writing off of that like eighth grade essay but no, in general I feel like my schooling wasn't very challenging. I don't feel like I ever really like...I'm sure I learned cause I'm here and I must have learned something but in my personal opinion, I didn't get the best education that I could have gotten. I can even like begin to pinpoint why or how but yeah, no, but I was made to feel for like the most of my life that I was an amazing student and I was constantly told like, oh, you're gonna be the next U.S. President. But I think that's something that teachers just say to students that are like performing well.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez (06:14):

Thank you so much. So you mentioned a lot of challenges along the way, you mentioned that although you felt you were very encouraged, that you were smart, What do you think allowed you to become a UCSD student, one of the best universities in the world? What was your support system?

Allison Hermosa (06:38):

I feel like city Heights is a community that is very impacted or at least this is a story that we were told. I don't know if this is completely true or like how beneficial this family was, but the price family, which is, I believe like they own Costco. They even sponsor the Price center here at UCSD but they had a lot of programs that they identified me as a student since sixth grade and I entered the Price scholars. And from there, they gave me a mentor up until 10th grade in which they would speak about the SATs and like help me with my homework and stuff. And then from there they also like fund college avenue compact, which is where they gave me like a mentor since ninth grade up until 12th grade.

Allison Hermosa ([07:31](#)):

They would help me just like checking up on me and there was like a time where I would ditch a lot and I wasn't doing so good in school, but they would still like encourage me and allow me to talk about it and give me resources as to how to improve my grades and stuff like that. So I feel like that, but like one of the main things that I feel like really, really got me to UCSD was reality changers, which they have a headquarters in city Heights and they get, they go to like many middle schools throughout San Diego. And I believe even in orange county, but yeah, they like go to many middle schools and they identify troubled kids or students that are having trouble succeeding in school.

Allison Hermosa ([08:28](#)):

And they take you in and they make you take drug tests every other week. And you have to go every week to your night and stuff. I never went to any of that. Cuz like I said, I was a pretty good student, like quote unquote, pretty good but by my senior year, someone, a friend of mine that was in that program since middle school introduced me to one of the, the workers there and he met me and he allowed me to enter the program cuz like they allow the workers to bring in three to four family members with no questions to ask to enroll in the program. A lot of students in reality changes have good success rates.

Allison Hermosa ([09:13](#)):

So that's a good benefit that they get. And yeah, so he met me and like he's saw potential in me I guess. And like, he allowed me to go in as like his family member and there, I got a mentor, his name's Bernie and he literally sat with me writing my essay. He sat with me doing my FAFSA literally telling me what to put in every single column. He told me that I got a full ride scholarship to UCSD when I couldn't understand the financial aid packet. He helped me with writing my resume when I was applying to UCLA and just things like that. He literally sat down and helped me reword things to make them sound smarter or more important.

Allison Hermosa ([10:03](#)):

and helped me sign up for the SATs and that kind of stuff. Oh no, no. Actually college avenue helped me sign for that... for the SATs and they like hosted an SAT workshop and stuff. So yeah, I think it's like all these programs that are concentrated in city Heights, that are mainly sponsored by the price family and reality changers that really got me even thinking about what college is. Cause I don't have... I don't know anyone that went to college in my family, in my life other than me now that I am at UCSD. So yeah, I think they were the support system that got me to where I am now.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([10:42](#)):

Thank you so much. That's very good to hear. It's very inspiring. how do you feel that your experience at UCSD has been,?

Allison Hermosa ([10:58](#)):

Well, my first year I felt like I wanted to drop out every single day. I had a really hard time. I think that's when I realized like how shitty, sorry for the cuss word, but so shitty. My education was ...while I was achieving or I was succeeding in a lot of my courses in high school. I was getting A's and without even trying, you know, like I wouldn't even go to school sometimes for a week and I would still like pass my classes with A's but then getting here and then I would like study and then I failed one course, like a

remedial math course. And I was like, fuck. it really like messed me up. And I remember Bernie, which is my reality changers mentor telling me y'all are amazing.

Allison Hermosa ([11:50](#)):

you are succeeding. You're good students. But believe me, when I say that Hoover high school did not prepare you for higher education, you know, like, and just like, know that when you're going in there and you know, I was so scared and then I came here and I was like, damn they really didn't <laugh> they really didn't prepare me. So every single day I kind of wanted to drop out and there was not a single... Like, everything seemed easier than continuing education but as the years went by, I kind of got used to studying and got used to... I don't know. I really feel like if I hadn't gotten the full ride scholarship, which is sponsored by CASP the chancellor association scholar program, I probably would've dropped out because to think that I would be paying like 10,000 every year and taking that out of loans and failing class and struggling, I would've probably been I don't wanna be in debt and then still not even graduate, you know?

Allison Hermosa ([12:53](#)):

So I feel having that full ride scholarship allowed me to make mistakes and still continue. Cause I was like, fuck it. Like it's free. You know what I mean? Like, this is literally a gift <laugh> so like why? And I personally felt like I was getting more back cuz every quarter I would get about like \$3,000 just for me to spend on my own. So I'm just like there is no other way for me to ever get this much amount of money and be free and you know potentially become someone or not become someone... I guess improve my... or like just move upwards, you know, like in terms of the social ladder. but yeah... what was the question again?

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([13:38](#)):

How do you feel about your experience at UCSD?

Allison Hermosa ([13:40](#)):

So I guess like kind of getting into that mindset not to say oh, let me think changing my mindset helped me cuz I feel like definitely I learned how to study and then I found some support in the people that I was living with and then eventually it actually started going to MEChA my second year and I felt like I started having meaningful conversations. I really just wanted to get involved. So that kind of kept me going and then the pandemic kind of felt like every single day I wanted to drop out as well but yeah, I don't know but I can say I'm here. I don't know actually how <laugh>, how I'm here, but I am and yeah.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([14:22](#)):

Well thank you so much for opening up about that. So do you think UCSD has done a decent or a good job, improving experience of students of marginalized backgrounds?

Allison Hermosa ([14:38](#)):

Not really. I guess for me, like the first thing that made me feel welcomed as a person of color at UCSD was Marshall college, specifically the DOC sequence, I felt like that was the first time where I learned a lot of my history and understood certain concepts, like hegemony and white supremacy and stuff like that. so I feel like that definitely kept me hooked and even just allowed me to understand what I wanted to study, cuz I came in first as a human bio major and then eventually I switched my major to sociology

and I think a part of it was because of DOC. And so yeah, I feel like in that sense, like UCSD gave me something, but at the end of the day, Marshall college was established because students fought for it and even then it is not perfect, you know, like recently I got a scholarship or a fucking GPA award.

Allison Hermosa ([15:47](#)):

and when I was like in the room, I was quite literally like one of the only brown people in there. And it was mainly white and Asian students that were taking up most of the space and most of the awards and most of, and you know, I get it cuz I mean, you know, probably like other brown, black people who weren't getting these GPA awards, but you know, I don't know. I feel like Marshall could have done more even like UCSD could have done more to make Marshall college a more welcoming place for people of color. Cuz a lot of times I did feel, you know, I still felt that like, even though that's kind of like, I guess internalized like imposter syndrome and stuff and like, um, I didn't feel, I felt like out of place. Um, yeah, I feel like they could have done more to make me feel more welcomed and like to not allow like certain students to speak over my experience today.

Allison Hermosa ([16:41](#)):

I had a lot of, you know, being in doc, a lot of things were shared, like knowledge was shared and a lot of white students did not like that. And they were often disrespectful to like the experiences of people of color. And I felt like, you know, it's kind of hard to say, oh silence them, but it's definitely like ...I don't know something could have been done but yeah, other than that, not really like UCSD hasn't done much. Um, where I felt like I've been helped is mainly like Oasis and MEChA, which is again, something that is, was established by like students and yeah, mainly it's been like me looking for the community and like the community being built by other students of color that has made me feel welcomed at UCSD and like, you know, I don't even feel welcomed to UCSD through this. I just like feel like I found my little community in my little home. Um, yeah. But at the end of the day, I'm not very much welcomed at UCSD

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([17:39](#)):

Thank you. What do you think is something that you have learned in your experience at UCSD?

Allison Hermosa ([17:47](#)):

Mm-hmm, <affirmative> like specific to something?

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([17:51](#)):

In general as a first generation and all of your identities?

Speaker 3 ([17:59](#)):

Hmm.

Allison Hermosa ([18:03](#)):

I would say one of the most...

Allison Hermosa ([18:11](#)):

Not, not even meaningful, but I think the most important things like in terms of survival would be how to navigate white institutions. Cuz I felt like coming from city Heights like the only white people that I was exposed to was the teachers that were in Hoover or like middle school, like, you know but they

were mainly like white savior teachers, you know? So it was like not real white people but like coming here was like the most exposed that I was to like white people ever in my life. And I think at first I had a really hard time, like, you know, even like looking at them cause it's just like so overwhelming, when you really don't grow up being around them and you know, it's like, they literally are so like completely different people from you in terms of culture, in terms of like the way they speak in terms of like, just like everything so that it was like, you know, shit often like even just having a conversation with them, like you can tell that they're like...think that you're dumb or that they think that you're like inferior.

Allison Hermosa ([19:16](#)):

So I feel like being at UCSD, really just like allowed me to like practice my interactions with white people and certain Asian people as well and allowed me to like

Allison Hermosa ([19:36](#)):

Become confident in who I am and know that I'm definitely not inferior and that's definitely like a stereotype or an ideology that is shared amongst society but at the end of the day, I made it and not because I'm better or like, because I'm an amazing person, you know, cause I really don't wanna put this like, oh, if you get to higher education like you're an amazing person cuz no. but it's like at the end of the day, it's really like they're not more than me. And I feel like I've learned to understand myself and my identity and their identity to the point that I can move on to like working in like white institutions and you know, being at peace without having to be like uncomfortable with their presence.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([20:29](#)):

Thank you for sharing that. I know you work in retention aspects at UCSD. Do you wanna talk more about your job?

Allison Hermosa ([20:42](#)):

Yeah. Actually access

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([20:45](#)):

I'm so sorry.

Allison Hermosa ([20:45](#)):

You're good. Uh, yeah, so my position, my current work position is Xoxotlani access coordinator and I work for SPACES and MEChA. So it's, mainly a position that focuses on promoting access to higher education. So that means like for undergraduate students, like creating workshops that will expose them to the idea of graduate school and for high school students making programs and stuff like that, that will expose them to the idea of, you know, college or like universities and stuff like that. One of the main things that... I, I think that the biggest event that I made in with other like MEChA people was the high school conference in which we brought a lot of students from San Diego to UCSD and like expose them to, you know certain workshops of identity and financial aid.

Allison Hermosa ([21:52](#)):

I forget, but like so many things that are related to like the Latine identity and higher education, um, and like a mock lecture and all that stuff. And that was mainly, I feel like the reason why I even applied for this position was because I very much know what it's like to be those students and what it's like to not

have any knowledge of higher education and to be completely lost and in need of resources beyond like the basic. This is SAT these are the, a through G requirements. And like, this is how you get into college, you know, like making it more meaningful in terms of like your identity. So I feel like that's why I wanted to be in this position. And a lot of the work that I put in that high school conference was based on what I feel I would've needed when I was in high school going into college. but yeah, um, this is like work that, you know, I don't exclusively do, it is something that MEChA has been doing for years and that SPACES has been doing for years and that hopefully will continue to do after I graduate.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([23:04](#)):

Yay. That sounds amazing and could you explain what do you think is the most important thing about your job?

Allison Hermosa ([23:14](#)):

I generally think it's like so silly building community <laugh> cuz I think like definitely these students... I'm exposed or like we are exposing them to these like concepts and this idea of higher education and not to say that anyone can do that...

Allison Hermosa ([23:57](#)):

Can you pause it?

Speaker 3 ([23:58](#)):

<laugh> okay.

Allison Hermosa ([24:02](#)):

So yeah, I think it's, um, building community and like I said, it's not like, you know, the, the exposure to higher education and all this, like these concepts and stuff. Like that's very much important as well. Um, but I feel like, you know, it's not meaningful when you just like throw all this information at students, it's kind of like, you know, you're exposed to it like, oh, like that's what colorism is. Or that's like what a stereotype is. And that's definitely something that like you learn and it's like, I don't know. Like I feel like eventually they'll learn about it in higher education, but it's like, I don't know. I feel like it's not as meaningful. So in terms of like building community, I feel like, um, not something that I completely did, but I feel like I definitely helped start, um, just like continuing the constant interactions between like MEChA spaces and high schools.

Allison Hermosa ([24:50](#)):

So like one of my main goals was to like build a relationship with Hoover high school and um, MEChA and spaces. And I feel like as of now that school has a lot of interactions and is building community with spaces and hopefully continues to build community with MEDCHA eventually to the point where it's like, um, you know, they're able to take any resources that we give and they're able to, to feel passionate and like inspired to learn rather than just like one time, like being exposed to like whatever we wanna give them and like at a high school conference, you know? Um, so yeah, so I feel like definitely like building community and making sure that these students feel supported.

Speaker 3 ([25:43](#)):

Yeah.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([25:44](#)):

That's very, um, that's very noble. Um, you keep, you brought, um, a lot, uh, the word community and I'm actually curious like how do you find community?

Allison Hermosa ([25:58](#)):

Hmm. Like how maybe how I found community. Honestly, I don't even know. I feel like building community is extremely difficult because there's so many like factors that go into it. Um, cuz I find that like sometimes it's like, I, I try my best to, or I don't know, maybe I don't, but <laugh>, I, I feel like a lot of times there's a lot of things that need to align in order for people to feel welcomed and to feel like understood, which is why, what I feel like community is, um, like just to be loved. And I feel like sometimes it's really difficult to love someone that is like really different than you. Um, so I feel an important way or like a way to find community is to be understanding of other people's like backgrounds and other people's like opinions and where they come from.

Allison Hermosa ([26:52](#)):

Um, but that's not to say like, oh, accept people that are like, oh, racist or you know, like fucking misogynist. Cuz I feel like I could never build community with someone like that, but definitely like being open to like teaching people, um, that are open to like learning as well. Um, but also like keeping in mind that like your own opinions and thoughts, aren't always like the only correct that that's the only correct way of thinking, you know? Um, so yeah, I feel like building community just is to love and to understand others and yeah, to welcome. I answered your question, right? Yes. Okay.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([27:34](#)):

Um, thank you so much. And um, how did you feel like you found that community, uh, U CS D

Allison Hermosa ([27:42](#)):

Mm um, well I would say my community definitely MEChA and quite honestly I feel like a lot of the people in MEChA have very similar needs and very similar, like beyond like political, like opinions and that kind of stuff. Um, in terms of like our family backgrounds and just like our experiences as people of color as like children of immigrants as, you know, working class background, um, as like, you know, being from certain neighborhoods and stuff like that, like we're all very similar in that sense. Or some of us are very similar in like one, some ways more than others. Um, and I feel like that has allowed for understanding and for love. Um, regardless of like, I don't know our like majors and like, you know, our career fucking plans or whatever, however you say it. Um, yeah, so I feel like truly, I don't know.

Allison Hermosa ([28:55](#)):

I don't even know. I feel like we were a community before <laugh> I don't know, honestly. Um, but yeah, I guess just through love and understanding everyone that's in MEChA. And I think, I think the fact that they were in MEChA allowed me to, like I thinking, oh, like they already in me, they were very much wanting to help others just like I do and that want to help others. And like made me open up myself and be like, I definitely wanna build or like I definitely wanna listen to them and love them and allow them into my life and be in their lives in that way. Build community.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([29:33](#)):

Do you have a favorite MEChA memory?

Allison Hermosa (29:35):

<laugh> okay. Like remember I was gonna say them,, memory <laugh> I would say, um, I would say my favorite memories have been just like the casual interactions, like with MEChA board members. Um, I, I definitely enjoy like the planning, even though I was very stressed <laugh> of like programs and stuff, because I feel, I find it very meaningful and like self-fulfilling, but the, I guess the, the times in which I felt the most alive or the most understood and the most like in community and at home was like, just even like sitting in the Metro office with like five other people, they were just hanging out, you know, pretending to study um <laugh> and just like, yeah, hanging out and having the most like dumb conversations and like, you know, drawing on balloons and like drawing on pieces of paper <laugh> or like just being there, like three or four in the morning. <laugh> um, you know, just like, without thinking about like stressful situations that have to do with UCSD or like even with planning stuff for MEChA and stuff. I find that to be like my best memories. Just let me, <affirmative> just loving each other. <laugh>

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez (30:58):

Wow. That's they're very cool. <laugh> um, so UCSD is very, um, very lucky to have you and you're graduating. Uh, I don't know when try like a week. I don't know. I think it's week, but what are your plans after graduation? If you have some,

Allison Hermosa (31:17):

Yeah. Um, honestly, I don't know for now I'm definitely gonna wait a year to like figure things out. I was definitely considering going to graduate school, um, possibly even like enrolling into like a PhD program or applying to a PhD program. Um, but, um, that is very much maybe not even a possibility in the next like four years, because I, um, because like I'm considering going into the military, given that like my parents are undocumented and that's like one of the only ways for them to become citizens or even just like gain some sort of like stability in the United States. Um, but obviously that's like a very hard decision to make. And I thought I had made it four years ago before I joined college. My goal throughout this whole four years was to like graduate and get into the military and then have them pay for my graduate school.

Allison Hermosa (32:20):

But like, obviously, like that was before I understood what even the military was and like, like how it like contributes to so many issues globally. Um, and you know, so then it's like now it's something that I don't stand for. Something that I don't, um, support. I, in general, like the way it's structured, it's like as a woman, as a woman of color, um, I would not feel welcome comfortable with like living in that space for the next four years of my life. So it's obviously something that I really am re considering and possibly like want to apply to graduate school, but that's something that I will think of in the next year of my life. Yeah.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez (33:07):

Thank you so much. Um, and you know, you're graduating congrats. <laugh> uh, what do you think if there was like any student that was thinking of, you know, not following your path, like going to, you know, U C S D uh, first generation, you know, different identities, what would you want to tell them?

Allison Hermosa (33:26):

I would say, ask for help and, uh, find your community <laugh>. Um, I feel like those are the only things that really have kept me like grounded, cuz I feel like when times got hard, at least like as a first generation college Stu as yeah, first generation college student as a child of immigrants, um, as a woman of color, I feel like I, you know, had many difficult experiences in higher education and you know, I often like would try to run to like my family room friends for like kind of like Barto and like, because they've never experienced that or don't even know what it's like or can't even imagine what it's like, like they wouldn't, they weren't able to provide me, um, like, um, so I felt like even just like being in match like that, like fucking sing, like, you know, miss got over here struggle just as much as I am or like, you know what I mean?

Allison Hermosa (34:31):

Or just like seeing other people like going through similar situations in terms of like, you know, like citizenship and stuff like that. It's like very like refreshing, you know, I don't see like, you know, not to say like trauma bonding, but like I to see other people struggling, like I am and like see them at the same time, like succeeding, like regardless, like I know this path is gonna graduate <laugh>, you know, and like I know that we're all gonna like be successful in our lives or clinical successful cuz what is success? But um, yeah, I feel like that's really, what's like kept me going. And so yeah, definitely like finding your community and like, you know, based on like your identities and whatever you identify, it's like, if you're, you know, you don't identify Latina or like don't feel so strongly about that then, you know, but you're queer then like you can join like, you know, queer, like ORs and stuff like that, but always like making sure that you find a community within the identity like that you identify with.

Allison Hermosa (35:38):

Um, and yeah, and like asking for help because at the end of the day, like you're in college to learn and rather, and like, even though professors like expect you to like know certain things, like they're there to teach you and if you aren't able to complete assignments or you aren't able to like complete exams, like, you know, their job is to like teach you. So like going to office hours, like may, maybe they might suck and like you will fail a class or whatever, but like, you know, looking for another professor, like looking for tutors and stuff like that. So you can keep on succeeding cuz like honestly you're there to learn. And like something that I kind of came in with was like trying to prove to everyone that I already knew things. Um, and a lot of times I would take on this.

Allison Hermosa (36:21):

Like I would do things on my own and like I would like spend hours like editing an essay, um, just for it to like, you know, get that a, which I like eventually I would. Um, but I like, it could have been easier and less stressful if I would've just like asked someone to read my essay and like asked them for guidance and like tips on how to like write an essay rather than me like literally breaking like my fucking head, trying to meet the standard, um, that U CSG was asking of me. Um, so yeah, like asking for help.

Cristian Fuentes Hernandez (36:55):

Yeah. Thank you so much. Uh, Allison, um, I think we're almost gonna end the interview. Uh, is there anything else you want to add to the interview?

Allison Hermosa (37:04):

Mm, not that I can think of. No.

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Cristian Fuentes Hernandez ([37:08](#)):

Okay. Well thank you so much, Alison, like you are an amazing person and I'm also glad that you gave me the opportunity to like interview you and, you know, share your story. So yes, uh, with that we conclude our interview and thank you so much. Thank