

VOICES OF EQUITY PODCAST

Episode 5 Season 1

NIKITA JOHNSON

FEMALE VOICE (singing): 0:00 We are the voices of equity podcast. We are the voices of equity podcast listen up ...ooh ... ooh...ooh...ooooh listen up.

MUSIC: 0:19 (Inaudible)

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 0:23 Hello thank you for joining us the Voices of Equity Podcasts at Lorain County Community College. We are your Co-hosts Denise Douglas...

KIONNA MACINTOSH PHARMS: 0:30 And Kionna Macintosh Pharms.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 0:33 As the Co-chairs of the Equity for Students Team at LCCC, we are excited to share the work of this team, the voices of those who do this work, and the voices of the students who are the reason for our work. We continue to conduct our interviews remotely due to COVID-19 pandemic. Students at Lorain County Community College are primarily taking their courses online this fall. Our guest today Nikita Johnson, is one of our students.

NIKITA JOHNSON: 0:55 Hello.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 0:57 Hi Nikita.

NIKITA JOHNSON: 0:58 Hi.

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 0:58 We are so happy to have today's guest. We're happy that you were able to take time out of your schedule to join us. I tell you; you remind me a lot of myself when I was a student. A non-traditional student that had life experience, circumstances that I had overcome. So, it is just a pure delight have you amongst us today sharing your story and how it relates to equity.

NIKITA JOHNSON: 1:32 Thank you, I'm happy to be here.

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 1:36 Yes ma'am. So, to get right into this particular podcast, please share some of your background with our listeners. Things like how many years you've been in school, your major, and anything else that you would like to share regarding your background.

NIKITA JOHNSON: 1:57 Well, my name is Nikita. I've been at Lorain County Community College since 2017. OK for my background I was a single mom since 15 years old. I came to Lorain College in 2017. I obtained my GED. That was my hardest, hardest dilemma. was obtaining my GED. Dropping out in 8th grade. So, my background right now, I'm going to be a social worker. With a partnership with you guys and as well as Youngstown State University.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 2:37 Nikita, one of the things I wanted just go back to the time when I first met you. So, I first met you when the late professor Amy Dickinson invited you to attend one of our Equity for Students teams' meeting. And you know I was, I was just so impressed by what you shared with us, but

I'm wondering what kind of, were your initial thoughts about being asked to join our meeting?

NIKITA JOHNSON: 3:04 I didn't understand why. Whenever I, well be pessimistic, and say she is she's excellent she was excellent professor. And I will always went through my experiences growing up in poverty and you know the things that I had to overcome to get to the state where I'm at now. And I didn't think that she would want me to speak with other people or have other people sell my story. I was just telling my story to influence the other children to let them see. Not the other children, the other students. Cos see, they're all younger. Studying hard and just jumping straight to college. I wanted, I wanted faculty to know people go through these things. There were plenty of women who express their stories to be and we all had something in common. It was working, going to school, being a mom. And being a single mom on top of that. That was the biggest barrier. And I wanted the faculty to know when women come to the college, or when anyone to college, they come behind with the background. And sometimes their background prevents them to being the best person they could possibly be. So, you know, when I came to the faculty meeting, I wanted I wanted the faculty to be aware. We're not, sometimes we stepped out, but we don't step back because we're giving up. We step out because we have other life dilemmas that is hindering us at that time.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 4:28 We're going to take a short break and when we return, Nikita will share her thoughts on the Equity for Students Team.

MUSIC: 4:34 (INAUDIBLE).

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 4:38 At Lorain County Community College, we understand the impact of the coronavirus doesn't just affect your education. When you're dealing with issues in your home, family, and personal life, it's not easy to focus on your classes. But don't worry, we're here to help. The Advocacy

and Resource Center, the ARC, can help you with access to food, counseling, financial, and other resources and support. So that you can spend less time worrying and more time focusing on your future. You can get in touch with us by calling 440-366-4272 or email us at arc@lorainccc.edu.

MUSIC: 5:18 (INAUDIBLE).

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 5:25 You shared about being a single mom, some of the issues with kind of being in class and trying to achieve your goals. When you heard that we had an Equity for Students Team, what were your thoughts about that?

NIKITA JOHNSON: 5:40 Like wow! Wow the support. When I met Kionna, every time she sees me, she gives me a hug. No matter what situation it may be, she makes sure that you know, she approaches me, she looks normal headed, keeps going. Those are things that are needed. We need this you know; students need to see this 'cause it's beautiful. I thought this is just this is an excellent idea.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 6:08 Thank you for sharing that.

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 6:10 Nikita, as Dr. Douglas stated you know, your story is truly powerful, and we are so grateful to have you at Lorain County Community College as one of our scholars. Because that's how we deem it.

NIKITA JOHNSON: 6:26 Thank you.

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 6:28 You know for us, doesn't necessarily mean that you receive straight A's, although we adore that you do a good job with your classes. But scholar means for for me personally, and I'm certain that Dr. Douglas will agree, it means that as I stated in the beginning, you have overcome obstacles that you know, individuals may not be aware of or individuals may not even be able to do. And then, continue to be a beam of light for others to see. And it exemplifies so we thank you for that. And in that note, on that note we, have another question because the things that we're going through now as a society, will you hear a lot of "Together we stand..." this that and the third you know. How did Covid impacted you and your family? How can you exemplify how are you I'm certain you are exemplifying you know, the same equity lens that you had when you visited us?

NIKITA JOHNSON: 7:38 It's very hard. My life is dedicated to being a mother. So, when I leave home and I go to school, I can be me. I can be me. I can be free. It's a chance for me to have my individuality outside of being a mother. And I'm a mother 24/7. I'm a mom 24/7. So, when I set foot at Lorain Community College it's like OK all of those rolls go out the window. I'm I'm a social work, some social work student. I have to take my career serious. This is, this is who I am, and this is where I'm going. So, when the Covid hit, it's like OK that is that was gone. That chance to keep moving forward it wasn't gone, I was I'm still going. But it just gave me a different light going to traditional courses and you know, stepping outside of my household. It gave me a different life. So, when the Covid hit you know, it slowed it down a little bit. And you know, it's kind of it's hard, Covid has been hard and made it is very hard.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 8:53 Nikita that's such an important point that you're making that when you were able to physically step into the classroom, step on campus, you were able to take on a role as student versus if you're at home all the time, you kind of, you're a mom 24/7. And you have to be a student at home. So how are you balancing those things? How are you making that work for yourself?

NIKITA JOHNSON: 9:17 It's hard. It is very very hard. Especially because of the kids they have schooling online now. So, I have 4 kids that I have to log in. And you know, I have schoolwork. I have work. So, it's it's it's very very hard and I have to make sure that I'm submitting assignments in myself and my kids are submitting in assignments. And then I have to go to work. So, it's very hard versus going in school. The kids they were able to go to school and I went, I was able to go to school at the same time, so it worked out. Socialize with other people who were you know, like minded people, who are trying to strive for better you know. So now, Covid has hit, it's been a hard, hard alley. Not just, I'm talking about emotionally, physically mentally, it's all it's just been overwhelming. And I'm ready to go back. Stepping on campus, so I can socialize and mingle with other people and have a role outside of being mom, you know. I love being a mom, don't get me wrong. But we all need our breaks.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 10:28 Nikita, I appreciate all that you're sharing I'm wondering if cause obviously you're still being very successful, what you're doing even with the difficulties? Is there a piece of advice that you would share with other students that perhaps or dealing with similar things that you're dealing with?

MUSIC: 10:46 (INAUDIBLE).

NIKITA JOHNSON: 10:54 I would say take the time out for you. Take the time out for you. Make sure you at least get one day a week where you can have some me time outside of any roles that your your your required to. Rather that is being a worker, rather that is being a student, a parent, grandmother whatever the case may be. Take the time out for you because it's very very important. And be patient just know everything is gonna be OK. It might seem hard at first, but you cannot have the bad without the good, and the good without the bad. Because you would not know the difference between the two.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 11:35 That's sage advice. Great wisdom from you Nikita. What is one thing that you want to share with the Equity for Students Team? You had a chance to share with us last Fall, but what do you want us to know now? Now that things are different for all of us in this environment?

NIKITA JOHNSON: 11:52 Just how hard it is to maintain grades during this time, you know. It's very very hard to, you know, keep a certain GPA that you had before before the pandemic. Students are really, really trying hard, but if the whole total different role now, you know. You have to instead of going in person like school and being hands on with their teachers hands on with faculty. Now everything is through cameras, through phones and it's you know, it's a whole new form of learning. So some people who never experienced technology that much or never utilized technology that much, like if it's kind of hard. It's that it's a whole new game. Before just picking up a book "Hey teacher or hey professor, this is what's going on. This is what I'm struggling can I talk to you outside of class?" If I have the weight. We have the weight. It is a weight. If this whole thing is a weight and we ask that during this time like you know, just continue to support us here for us. Like how you are now. Let our voices be heard. Let everyone have that chance and that opportunity to express their concerns when it comes to equity and things to that nature. Because everything affects us, everything affects us.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 13:11 Thank you so much Nikita. We really appreciate your time today.

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 13:16 Yes, thank you so much your story. It's powerful and we are so looking forward to sharing it with all.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 13:24 Thank you for joining us and I want to thank our listeners for joining us for this episode of the voices of equity podcast the LCCC brought to you by Boom Radio.