

VOICES OF EQUITY PODCAST

Episode 8 Season 1

KARLA ALEMAN part 2

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.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 0:24 Thank you for joining us for the Voices of Equity Podcasts at Lorain County Community College. We are your co-hosts Denise Douglas...

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 0:31 And Kionna McIntosh Pharms.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 0:33 As the co-chair of the Equity for Students Team at LCCC, we're 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. In part two of our discussion with Karla Aleman she describes how important just one person was in helping her move forward in her educational journey.

KARLA ALEMAN: 0:52 I was so fortunate when I was in 9th grade that someone from the local Community College came into my English class and said "Hey college is doable. There's a thing called financial aid." Because I knew about college. I knew college would be wonderful if I could go, but I immediately, you know, ever since I was a kid. I'm like there's no way we could ever afford me going to college. Thankfully, this one guy, I don't remember his name, but he was amazing. He came in and explained, "hey, there's financial aid. There's work study. There's even loans and that this is doable," you know? And this is what you do, a thing called a FASFA. You know stuff like that? And I was a game changer for me and so I had to plan ahead to me.

Ultimately, what this comes down to is ever since I was young. Despite challenges and despite kind of, you know, the world around me. I at least knew that if I can, if I can get past this whole reading thing. I could probably do this whole college thing. You know, I could probably change my life and I knew this was the only way. Like there's no way I was going to win the lottery. There's, you know, like I don't think I wanted it to be different than what it was. So, at the same time, you know I went to college, studied history and what have you? And admittedly, you know a little bit of cynicism for how the world works. You know, it's kind of a depressing place when you take a step back sometimes and look at all the negatives. And I was fortunate that I got that job in a library, when I was an undergrad. And I immersed myself in an environment with information where information is at your fingertips and all you have to do is read it. And that is huge for me. Of course, as someone who used to not be able to read at all. So ultimately, when I decided to go into library work and went to grad school and just really got immersed in and I identified so strongly with that need for information and how much of a game changer it was. I knew this was like this was my path. This is what I was born to do. I was super fortunate. I know not everyone feels that way about their chosen careers or professions. Sometimes it's hard to kind of know what you want. I was really fortunate at that time to just realize the core values of libraries. Getting people access to information, getting them resources, getting them access to people is sort of the underlying bedrock of what I want to be all about. Because in the end, I don't still want to help you know just anybody. I want to help people from communities like where I grew up. And I want to make sure that everyone is getting access and knows what to do with the information in the technology that they have access with. So, as I noted, the digital divide is huge. And so, as I continued on that, that tends to be my focus with my career is even looking at the digital divide. Looking at the Internet. Looking at these types of connections and making sure that we are providing services so that. people make those connections, and they get access, and they know what to do with the information that technology, when they have it. So, that's a little bit a taste of my equity journey. Ultimately, I was in need of a bit of equity, and I was thankful that I got resources at different times in different places, and even that one random guy who came to make a presentation. And some, you know, high school English class to a

bunch of 9th graders. All of that has helped me and I would not be where I am today with that mixture of resources and hard work, and so that's my story.

MUSIC: 5:07 (INAUDIBLE).

KIONNA MCINTOSH PHARMS: 5:11 And an incredible one is. You stated a few things that touch my heart. And one of them was that you know the fact that individuals have an opportunity or should be privy to opportunities. Things such as just as simple as information, right? That everyone should have the right to obtain the information. And the fact that someone, although despite your obstacles. Your trials and tribulations. It took one person to enlighten you on resources that you didn't know about. From an unexpected place you didn't know this guy. You still to this day, appreciate him. Decades later, right? So, it is really, really impactful. So, incredible story and we certainly appreciate you sharing it.

KARLA ALEMAN: 6:13 My journey and so many people's journeys, it is a combination of just the happenstance of the people that you need in your lives. And the resources that you access and stuff that you have the courage to take advantage of. There are moments when I made some poor decisions because I didn't have the courage to look into it or to explore that option or. I didn't have the self-confidence, you know. Sometimes you doubt yourself a lot, particularly when you're kind of, you know, working towards maybe changing your financial circumstances. Sometimes that means you're entering worlds that you're not familiar with, and I definitely had to go through all of those struggles as well. On a side note, I am someone who is half white, half Cuban and so I'm used to kind of being in between different worlds and an getting your influence and culturally and stuff like that for different areas. And so, I think that has helped me in a way just sort of, you know go in and observe different environments and an learn about different cultures. Even between you know, different types of socioeconomic you know environments. And so, I just highly value, you know, individuals' ability to adapt and to have recognized that it does take courage to make these kinds of changes in your life. Sometimes you want you know I need resources. My life cannot be

this different, but it is a courageous journey that you have to take. And I have not always been courageous and that is OK too. You know you will make it. I certainly feel like I am in a place where I'm doing a job that I love. And. I thankfully, am much better financially. When I first started this 20 years ago, and you know, now I'm the one supporting my mom in different ways and it's, you know, life can happen. And that combination of the resources and your own courage to work hard, so that's my story again sticking to it.

DR. DENISE DOUGLAS: 8:26 Karla, thank you for sharing your equity story. Also, thank you to our listeners for joining us for this episode of the Voices of Equity Podcasts. This concludes season one, but we look forward to launching Season 2 in the fall semester. The Voices of Equity Podcast is brought to you by Boom Radio.

MUSIC: 853 (INAUDIBLE).