

Narrator: Cody Carlson

Interviewee: Daniel Mendoza

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Dictation of Daniel Mendoza's Oral History

Cody: All right, cool. You can say your name one more time, please.

Daniel Mendoza: Daniel Mendoza.

Cody: All right. All right, Daniel, tell me a little about yourself.

Daniel Mendoza: I'm Daniel Mendoza. I work here at Barrio Logan College Institute. I am the program assistant for the high school and middle school program. I am 20 years old. I was born and raised in San Diego, currently attend San Diego State, and I am a third year studying economics with an emphasis in public policy. I am minoring in leadership.

Cody: How long have you been working for BLCI?

Daniel Mendoza: About five months now.

Cody: Five months. And have you enjoyed it so far?

Daniel Mendoza: Yes, I have. Actually, I'm a BLCI alum so I went through the program as a student from fifth grade till I graduated high school, then in my third year in college I decided to come back and [inaudible 00:01:01] the program.

Cody: Where's your family from originally?

Daniel Mendoza: My parents are from Mexico. My mom's from Guadalajara, and my dad is from Tijuana.

Cody: What made you get into this program, or how'd you find this program?

Daniel Mendoza: Since I was a student, I kind of decided that I wanted to give back to the community. I thought this was a good way of getting professional experience, so I applied for the job and I was hired.

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- Cody: Great. Why did you enroll in BLCI?
- Daniel Mendoza: As a student?
- Cody: As a student, yeah.
- Daniel Mendoza: Being a first generation college student, I guess the path to college isn't very simple. You don't necessarily have a lot of resources or opportunities so I feel like BLCI could provide that and feel like my parents understood that, too, and that's why they enrolled me in the program, and through that a lot of opportunities opened up.
- Cody: When did you enroll in BLCI as a student?
- Daniel Mendoza: When I was in fifth grade so-
- Cody: What were the specific things about BLCI that helped develop your future moving forward?
- Daniel Mendoza: What they offer at BLCI, they offer tutoring which helps you academically, obviously make you more competitive when you enroll for college. They provide a lot of opportunities to build experience and to build a resume. They do a lot of resume building. They do a lot of workshops that help you, in general, succeed in college like time management or career planning. I feel like BLCI really kept me focused as an after-school program.
- Cody: You think that it really was able to help you harvest your skills moving forward, for the most part, you'd say?
- Daniel Mendoza: Yeah.
- Cody: What do you want to do once you graduate?
- Daniel Mendoza: What I'm interested in is public policy. Ideally, I would like to work with public policy, whether that be in the private sector with nonprofits or the public sector through the government. Just anything related to policy.
- Cody: Okay, I like that. Do you have any siblings or anything like that?
- Daniel Mendoza: I do. I have one older sister and one younger sister.
- Cody: Were they able to go through BLCI at all?
- Daniel Mendoza: My younger sister is currently enrolled in BLCI. She's in eighth grade.

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- Cody: Oh, cool. Very cool. Do you work with her directly at all?
- Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, sometimes, yeah.
- Cody: I can only assume that she looks up to you, especially in this kind of setting like that.
- Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, I think that's why a lot of the staff encourage alumni to come back, because they feel that we're like role models since we've been through the program. They can see that we went through the process and got enrolled in college, and then furthermore, we came back and supported the program.
- Cody: Very cool. What's something that you wish you could tell your younger self?
- Daniel Mendoza: My younger self?
- Cody: Yeah, now that you're older and wiser, maybe have a little bit more under your belt.
- Daniel Mendoza: Maybe to enjoy the present, I suppose. I was very future oriented all the time, and I was focused on succeeding in the future in college. That kind of became my focus to the point where I maybe wouldn't enjoy as much at the present.
- Cody: That still gives you a help drive. What really helped you harvest those skills, looking for the future, looking for a better future?
- Daniel Mendoza: Like what in BLCI helped me?
- Cody: Either BLCI or your family or anything in general. What gave you your aspirations to dream bigger for a better future?
- Daniel Mendoza: I would say family and BLCI. I remember when I was in middle school, I had this coordinator named Mr. Julio here in BLCI, and he was very influential in my aspirations. He was a mentor to me, and he focused a lot on giving back to the community and giving back in the community. Stuff like that.
- Cody: Are you still able to keep in contact with him today?
- Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, I saw him not too long ago.
- Cody: Oh, cool. What specific things did he help you with exactly? Do you have any examples? Maybe you were going through a tough time or something

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like that and he helped you through it, or maybe you were down on yourself and ...

Daniel Mendoza: Sure, yeah. He was a mentor so he was very involved in checking up on me. How I was doing academically and in terms of emotionally and socially and stuff, and he was just always giving me lessons. I think one of his big take aways for me was staying humble and giving back.

Cody: With you working with kids all the time, do you feel that connection that you had with him, you creating that with these other kids that you are around?

Daniel Mendoza: Absolutely. I feel like a lot of them I can connect with.

Cody: Do you think that's because you went through this process exactly so you kind of understand where they've been and where they're going?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. I notice that a lot of the program coordinator specialists are much older and this is their full-time job. Sometimes they kind of fear their strictness, whereas me and maybe the other program assistants like Crystal or Beatrice are much younger so they feel like they can relate and they can come to us with maybe their social problems and stuff like that.

Cody: All right. When your family came to America, can you tell me a little bit about that process? Them coming here, and what they've experienced, and how that's affected you in one way or another?

Daniel Mendoza: Yes, I feel like they didn't really have the opportunity in their own country. Opportunities that are available here in the U.S. So I feel they kind of accepted that, and they tried to make sure that their kids, us, we would have opportunities they never had. I'm sure it wasn't easy to transition, given that they didn't speak the language, and they didn't have college experience and such. It's just a complete different world, but they persevered.

Cody: So their own aspirations and ambitions probably helped guide you towards your own future creating a better life.

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, absolutely. I remember writing about that in my college essay.

Cody: You probably feel very at home with those feelings of dreaming forward through your parents.

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah.

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Cody: Cool. I think that's about all I have to ask for right now. Do you have anything more to add at the end here.

Daniel Mendoza: I'm good. Yeah.

Cody: Okay, cool. Thank you very much. Let me go ahead and pause-

Dictation of Interview 2

Cody Carlson: My name is Cody Carlson and I'm here at Barrio Logan College Institute with Daniel Mendoza. And I'm here just asking a few questions. It is Mendoza, right?

Daniel Mendoza: Yes, Daniel Mendoza.

Cody Carlson: Excellent. So Daniel, tell me your favorite foods.

Daniel Mendoza: My top favorite food has gotta be pizza. Tacos are probably up there. Yeah, a bunch of crappy food that's not very healthy.

Cody Carlson: Does your family cook a lot at home?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, my dad works as a chef, so he's a pretty good cook and he's always cooking breakfast or...

Cody Carlson: Oh, cool. Well, where's he a chef at?

Daniel Mendoza: He works in the Gaslamp Quarter in downtown San Diego. It's a Japanese restaurant. So the thing he cooks for us, like as a specialty usually are shrimp tacos.

Cody Carlson: Oh, nice. Has he taught you to cook at all?

Daniel Mendoza: No, I'm not [inaudible 00:01:02].

Cody Carlson: Oh, why not?

Daniel Mendoza: Not like my mom. [crosstalk 00:01:08]. I mean, I'm busy. Yeah, not really my interest right now.

Cody Carlson: Yeah. Where did he get his passion for cooking?

Daniel Mendoza: Well, I think my mom taught him a little bit as they got married. But I know at this place where he's a chef now, he began as a dishwasher.

Cody Carlson: Oh cool.

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Daniel Mendoza: And then he kind of got moved up and moved his way up, so he's a quick learner.

Cody Carlson: All right. What does your mom do?

Daniel Mendoza: My mom, she does accounting for a chain of restaurants and local restaurants here in San Diego. Mexican restaurants.

Cody Carlson: So more or less both in the food industry and somewhere around there?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. Yeah, me too.

Cody Carlson: You too?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. I have another job besides this one. I'm a busser in Old Town. A Mexican restaurant in Old Town, it's called [crosstalk 00:02:01].

Cody Carlson: Oh nice. Which restaurant?

Daniel Mendoza: Casa Guadalajara.

Cody Carlson: So you could hook it up if stop in there?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. Yeah. I could get you seated real quick because they have long wait times.

Cody Carlson: That's all I need. That's all I need. Whatever gets me to food quicker. That makes me happy. What kind of music do you listen to?

Daniel Mendoza: A lot of things. Probably main is hip hop, like rap. And then R and B and stuff in Spanish, like when I get home.

Cody Carlson: Okay. All right. What's your favorite artist? Maybe specifically for the reggaeton?

Daniel Mendoza: For reggaeton? Bad Money. He just had a pretty good album recently that he just released. That was pretty good.

Cody Carlson: Nice. Wasn't he at Coachella maybe?

Daniel Mendoza: I think he was. He's one of the big ones, though, for sure.

Cody Carlson: Yeah. Pretty well known. Stuff like that. What got you into that music?

Daniel Mendoza: Just family. I mean, coming from a Hispanic background, I was listening to music in Spanish, like my aunts, my mom, my cousins. So it's kinda how I got into it.

Cody Carlson: Sure, yeah. Do you play any instruments or any musicians in your family or...?

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Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. Well, also I would say one of my interests was also, I studied abroad in Brazil a year ago. And that's where I kind of feel embraced more of my Latin culture even though I guess they're a little different. But that was really fun.

Cody Carlson: All right. So tell me about your study abroad program. What'd you do there? How long were you there for?

Daniel Mendoza: So this was a summer program. We were there for three weeks. We went to Brazil, we were first in Salvador, which is a city in Brazil. And then we flew to Rio. And the purpose of the program is called sustainability, inequality, activism. Something like that. And it focused on poverty and inequality. And Brazil is very unique just because there is just a huge inequality. There's very rich communities and you walk two blocks and there's a favela right there and it's kind of dangerous. And that's what the program focused on. And we went to bunch of nonprofits. We visited to schools. We went into favelas and just different organizations that in their own way are kind of activists and they work to end poverty.

Cody Carlson: Oh very cool. So what did you do specifically while you were there?

Daniel Mendoza: So we kind of used Brazil as a case study. We were reading a lot of books. So we would visit, for example, visit an elementary school and we'd kinda tour around. And then we had the chance to ask questions to the principal and the teachers and through that we learned their thoughts on maybe the Brazilian government, what they could do more or their own personal struggles with poverty or the students' struggles with poverty. So we kind of just used Brazil in general as a case study to learn about inequality and poverty and what we could do.

Cody Carlson: Sure. So what have you done moving forward beyond that? So have you gone back and are you a part of that program at all still?

Daniel Mendoza: I know the teacher, the faculty that led the program. But no. I mean, we did kind of build some connections. I know another guy, I have his contact information that we met over there. He's kind of an activist over there.

Cody Carlson: Oh cool. How long were you there for?

Daniel Mendoza: I was there about three weeks. Yeah, about a year ago.

Cody Carlson: What would you say your a your favorite part was?

Daniel Mendoza: Favorite part? Maybe we visited this one favela. So this favela was unique because it was one of the few favelas that resisted being moved. A lot of these communities were moved during the World Cup. And this one specifically was during the Olympics. So the Brazilian government wanted to move this community, just push the people out to different locations just so that they could build their stadium or whatever. And this community was unique because

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the whole community and a bunch of activists gathered together and they brought national media attention into it and they were a big riot, where the police was trying to forcibly remove and they all stood their ground.

Daniel Mendoza: And it got a little bloody. But that was really inspiring, seeing how the people came together, defended their community. And in the end they won. I mean, the stadiums like right next to it, but they didn't displace the people that were there.

Cody Carlson: Yeah. I remember hearing about the whole gentrification of that areas and all around it, especially, just to try to make Brazil almost secret... Almost tried to cloak Brazil in a different fashion than maybe what it is. And try to hide the struggle of what's going on.

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, so we went really recently, since the Olympics, and a lot of the people that we spoke to felt that the money could have been used elsewhere. I mean, there's just so much poverty and crime and drug cartels in Brazil and the government decided to spend it on building stadiums and just putting this front that Brazil was okay when a lot of the people felt like it wasn't.

Cody Carlson: Sure. Do you see maybe a similar instance of what happened there to maybe what has occurred in maybe Barrio Logan type area?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. I mean, I feel like in Brazil, the history, it relates to lot to just Latin America in general. I mean, Latin America, since their origin, since their founding, they've been plagued with drug cartels and corruption and such. And I think it's that systemic oppression that has led a lot of people to immigrate out of Latin American countries into the US particularly, just because it's a wealthier country with more opportunity. And that same systemic oppression that began in those countries that has caused immigration to here. And of course they come with less income and that kind of ends up affecting a lot of their opportunities, even here.

Cody Carlson: Yeah, it's almost like the exact same thing. It's just repeating what just happened there now here. Maybe if someone immigrated to America, maybe the same thing, it occurs.

Cody Carlson: So yeah, I mean clearly that parallels a lot of stuff that's happened around this area. Like with Brazil. Have you personally been able to do anything about it? I mean, I know the program you had there... Have you been able to enact on it here?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. So, I know the mission statement of BLCI is to end the poverty of cycle through getting students in low income, first generation communities into college. So here at this program, we see BLCI as a way of getting the students into a, where they can be global citizens and contribute to our economy and such. So here in BLCI, what we focus on is getting the students who may be

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struggling with grades or they may be affected in other ways in their community, whether it's bad influences and such. And here we kind of drive the students and make sure they're focused on college. And we make sure to get the parents involved as well. So, ultimate goal is to break the cycle of poverty and crime and get them into college.

Cody Carlson: Sure. Would you ever maybe go back to Brazil to see if you can implement the program here you have at BLCI, maybe down there?

Daniel Mendoza: Oh yeah. Yeah. I mean, I would like to go back. I mean it's super interesting. The Brazilian people are, they're just very happy people in general. They're very, positive outlook in general, even though there's a lot of struggles over there. I know recently they elected this very right wing president. And also their last two presidents have actually been incarcerated. So it just shows how deep the corruption in Brazil goes. So I feel like that's why a lot of the Brazilian people kind of led to extremism and they ended up electing a right wing.... He's very, very interesting guy.

Cody Carlson: Yeah, I don't know much about Brazil other than they speak Portuguese there.

Daniel Mendoza: Play soccer.

Cody Carlson: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. I almost feel bad that I don't know more, but... What else do you know about this new president that's extreme, what could he do for the country? Do you know?

Daniel Mendoza: I don't remember his name, but if you look him up, I mean, all the news articles say he's the Brazilian Trump. He's compared to Trump just because he's so very vocal. Extreme. He's very right wing and he's against immigration. Very much like Trump. This guy, in my opinion, he said probably worse things than Trump. There's videos of him.

Cody Carlson: That's saying a lot.

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, yeah. There's videos of him saying just overt sexism. I remember seeing a video of him... This politician, female politician in Brazil, and he would just kind of like, he was just straight up. He just said, "Your opinion doesn't matter because you're a woman." Or something like that. It's crazy that he got elected. But I mean, I guess that's how the situation was that where the Brazilian people were like, there's just so much corruption and they felt like this guy wasn't. Even though he might not be the best guy, he got elected.

Cody Carlson: It almost felt like his extremism felt so truthful that maybe that's what they were going for?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. I mean, I feel like they just wanted to change from the status quo and he brought that change, even though he may be the best guy.

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- Cody Carlson: Yeah. It's interesting. There just seems like there's a lot of parallels between Brazil and the US in this case and many other cases.
- Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, I mean, in the world there's a global trend towards the extremes. Some countries have gone very left. For example, Mexico recently elected AMLO, that's the acronym and he is very left wing. He's compared to Bernie Sanders. He's a populist. And so, just like a global trend. Each country is going either very right wing like we did in the US and Brazil and other countries. And even in the UK and some countries are going very left, like Canada and Mexico and other countries.
- Cody Carlson: Yeah, definitely. I obviously know more about the Canada, Mexico, what's occurring there. Is there anything that you know of specifically that would parallel or be similar to the US or they'd just be completely like [crosstalk 00:13:36]?
- Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, the politics... I mean, I think they have different histories. I mean the US in general is just a wealthier country. Maybe they struggled more with racism and systemic oppression, whereas Latin American countries have struggled more with inequality and income and the rich. There's just a lot of elites that kinda run the country. And there's really no way out. I mean, I think that's a big difference. Here in the US there's generally... Even though it may be hard, there's movement between classes. It's possible to be born low income and still go to college and maybe have a higher income, whereas in Mexico and other Latin American countries, I don't think it's really a possibility. Education costs money and not everyone can get an education. That's why a lot of people succumb to drug cartels and stuff because that's the money. It's easy cash. I mean, that's what they need to do to take care of their families.
- Cody Carlson: When did your family come to the US?
- Daniel Mendoza: Parents probably came, probably when my sister was born, right before, so like 25 years ago.
- Cody Carlson: Okay. So you guys are definitely been here for a decent amount of time. Do you know what exactly your parents came here for?
- Daniel Mendoza: Opportunity. The American dream, I guess. I know it was for us, for the children. There's not as many opportunities and they wanted their kids to have the opportunities that they never had, which is going to college and stuff.
- Cody Carlson: Yeah. No, that's very cool. There's a lot of people that might say the quote unquote American Dream is not real or not alive. But what you're saying is, that I'm getting is that in Mexico, if you start off not as wealthy then that you're more likely to stay that way. But at least in the US, you still have a chance to work your way up.

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Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, I think that's what... I mean, most Latin American countries see, they don't see opportunity in their own country and they decide it's better to immigrate. And that's why you saw the migrant caravan and stuff. I mean, contrary to what a lot of people say, I don't think they're the criminals. I think they're just low income, poor people who just want, I mean [crosstalk 00:16:08]

Cody Carlson: Yeah. I mean, some chance is better than no chance.

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. Yeah. And it's not easy, either. I mean, it's a difficult journey. It's dangerous, I mean, especially when you have no money, safety issues. There's kidnapping, all kinds of stuff, but they take the chance.

Cody Carlson: Yeah. Yeah. Like you were saying, some chance is better than no chance. Survival, better your life at one point or another. I mean, that seems like what your parents did, exactly. Similar idea.

Daniel Mendoza: And they were maybe a little lucky. I mean, they're a little lucky because my mom kind of came legally and she's a US resident whereas a lot of other immigrants come undocumented, which just limits their opportunities here.

Cody Carlson: Sure. Do you still have family in Mexico?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. Yeah. Grandma, Grandpa. [crosstalk 00:17:01]

Cody Carlson: How often are you going to see them?

Daniel Mendoza: Maybe... Do you want to switch places? They're about to start.

Cody Carlson: We can just finish it up real quick. So yeah.

Daniel Mendoza: How often?

Cody Carlson: So how often do you see them?

Daniel Mendoza: Maybe, we go like every three weeks to see my grandparents.

Cody Carlson: Oh, that's pretty good. What do they do down in Mexico? Do they ever have any interest to come to the US at all?

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah, they actually, my mom's family is pretty, I mean they have good jobs in Mexico. I have an uncle who works with the Mexican government. He's part of the cultural diversity team in Tijuana. I have another uncle, he has a ballet company. So he went through some ballet school in Mexico City and he has his own ballet company. And so yeah, they have pretty good jobs. I'm sure that's why my mom was able to come legally, just because you need to have certain requirements or land or something.

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Cody Carlson: Sure. Something backing you up a little.

Daniel Mendoza: Yeah. They wouldn't let just a low income poor person just cross legally.

Cody Carlson: Yeah. All right. Do you have anything more to add? Anything more you want to say about yourself?

Daniel Mendoza: No.

Cody Carlson: All right, cool.