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Aiden Crowley: Yeah, my name's Aiden. I am a data science major at Ucsd and I am recording this interview for the ROHP website as well as History of the US 120. Can you introduce yourself.

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Yasmin Renteria: Sure my name is Yasmin Davidson. I work for Barrio Logan College Institute at the El Cajon site. I don't know how deep you want me to go into my introduction. I know that's one of the questions.

Aiden Crowley: Yeah. Let's get started with the first question. I mean, can you tell me a little bit about yourself, and maybe a little bit of your background.

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Yasmin Renteria: Sure. Excuse me. So I was raised in Dallas, Texas. I recently moved to San Diego about 2 years ago. I am married, and I value my faith in my family. I got my middle and high school education from the first public all girls school in the State of Texas. It's called Irma Rangale, Young Women's Leadership School. I went on to receive my bachelor's in psychology at Austin College, with a minor in education in 2019, and then through that minor my college had a fast track 5 year program. So I was able to complete my masters a year after, in 2020 a master of arts in teaching early childhood education through sixth grade generalists. So received my certification basically to teach any grade level from early childhood, which is about 3 years old through sixth grade. But yeah, thats a little bit about my background.

Aiden Crowley: That's awesome.(pause) What is BLCI?

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Yasmin Renteria: What is BLCI?. So BLCI stands for again, Barrio Logan College Institute. It's kind of a mouthful. So we do like to say, BLCI. The students know us by BLCI. The parents do and what is it? Really, It's an after school program that prepares students to be the first in their families to go to college. So the first site was in Barrio Logan. They had a very low college attendance rate, and so they, I mean, and and even just like graduating from school right, as a feat. So they decided that back, you know, 20 years ago, 20 plus years ago that they would want to be the change in that community. So Barrio Logan, started there. BLCI started there and Barrio Logan.They were able to get students and families interested, in joining the program. And they went through the program. And we're able to go to college. And so that was like a really great you know, goal to to achieve. And so after some years they expanded. They went to Chula Vista. They went to El Cajon. They were able to join hands with San Diego promise neighborhood and upward bound, since they're like similar goals in mind. So that is what BLCI is all about is sending kids off to college and getting, you know the kids prepared, but not just the kids, but the parents as well. So the parents, you know, have no idea what's going on, what to do. Where to go or when to do it. So blci kind of lets them in into into the know right. People who have gone to college for generations kinda like know what the process is, what to do. What to look for and so you have these parents who, a majority of which are low income. And so they, you know, they work blue collar jobs. And so they just don't have the tools to be able to know what to do and and roll their kids to college, and and how to help them even through high school, right? Getting them in that mentality, getting them ready. So thankfully, BLCI is not just for the high schoolers. It's for middle school and elementary, too. And I work with elementary school students specifically. So just getting them. you know, used to the idea of it's possible to go to college. You may be young, and but you can have a

career. You can be successful and just getting them ready in their education and their academics while they're young, establishing like a good foundation. And then they go off to middle school and they learn a little bit more skills like you know how to talk how to talk in front of people like public speaking, and how to give a presentation, how to be a leader, how to set and meet your goals. And so every program, you know, elementary program, middle school program, high school program has a goal in mind that they want to achieve, and at least for elementary, it's to get them academically ready so that they're building a good foundation as they move on to middle school and high school. Yeah.

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Aiden Crowley: Okay! Just add on to that. How many years have you been with program like, have you seen anything like evolve throughout.

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00:05:01.820 --> 00:05:28.829

Yasmin Renteria: Yeah, so when it's like, I told you I moved here 2 years ago, and I was like on the job hunt, you know as it goes, and I knew that I wanted to work for something that I believed in. I didn't just want to find any job I was able to bring like a remote job over. And so I was working as I was here, and also Job searching. They knew that I was gonna eventually move to another job, and they were very kind to me and let me stay with them as long as I needed to. So I was able to take my time with with the job search and, So I've been working with BLCI to answer your question, It'll be 2 years in September. So we still got a little bit to go. But something I have seen evolve is well, okay. Everyone believes in the mission right, the mission to send kids off to college. Everyone believes in that, but I think something I've seen evolved within BLCI is just like the the structure, and like the just like when I joined I was a little bit, I guess, surprised how long the program had existed, and certain things that still weren't, I guess, hashed out, or we're still kinda being hashed out. And I was like, "Oh Ok", this is interesting because they were able to execute so many successful stories. Even though maybe, like lower level things, or at least things that are not very, they have to do with the students more with like the Admin side, administration of of like, how to write notes and how to do meetings, and how the everything goes like I know committees. We have a bunch of committees that are specific to a certain area. I'm part of like a program excellence committee. I'm part of The Continuous Improvement Committee. So like, how can we keep making BLCI better? I know there's a smart growth Committee. So it's like how to make the organization grow in like a smart and efficient way. And so we just have these committees that started not too long ago. I think they had started maybe a year before I joined and so I've seen that, like evolution of of ideas, of implementation of those ideas, of how to be more efficient, how to do things consistently and cause we have different sites like I mentioned. Right? We have the Barrio Logan we have the Chula Vista and we have El Cajon. So something we're really trying to hash out right now is how to make sure that we're all being fair and to each other as coworkers and then how to also differentiate, based on the different communities that we serve right because Barrio Logan serves a majority, Hispanic population, and so certain things that they do might not apply to El Cajon, which is actually majority, Middle Eastern culture, and and also Hispanic culture those are the two major communities that we serve. So that evolution of like being conscientious of the communities that we serve, of the differences that might need to be implemented but also still trying to be consistent and fair across the board to make sure that you know the data that we collect is relevant. And you know that kind of stuff. So that's something that I've seen evolved. At least with the students. It's been really consistent with the students. We're always just trying to be there and be the best that we can for the students. It's more of like the background stuff that we're hashing out and evolving.

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Aiden Crowley: Yeah, that's awesome! I guess my next question would be, what what sparked your interest like? For working with BLCI.

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00:08:33.740 --> 00:08:52.060

Yasmin Renteria: Yeah. So yeah, I guess I was kind of starting to talk a little bit about this in the earlier

question, I was on the job hunt right? And I was, I applied to a few different places. But I knew I wanted to know that the work I was doing mattered. And I kid you not when. So I was like job searching, maybe for like 4 months. And this BLCI Job posting wasn't there until like that later month, maybe, like the fourth month of job hunting. And as soon as I saw I was like, I told my husband I was like, I need this job like I saw the job posting. It was first generation, you know. They serve first generation, college students. And I myself was a first generation college student. So I was like this, I believe in this. And I actually originally thought I was gonna be working at the Barrio Logan site. Not that it mattered like, I know, I wanted to serve first generation students, anyway. So I thought was like, Oh, this is like a Hispanic community like I know how to speak Spanish like, I feel like, I'll really fit into this community like, I want to make a change. And and that's always been my like go to for anything that I do like When I decided to be a teacher like I wanted to be the change. And even if it's in a small way, right every year, I would see new students. And like, I could cause a change, plant a little seed of like being global citizens and being a responsible you know, world changes and stuff. So I was when I saw this job posting, I was like this I believe in the mission. I believe in the work that they do. I think I'll be making a difference. Even in my small way. And I was. And I know this is, I think, a later question about the culture. And so I've learned so much, and so I'm glad, in a way that I was not placed at the Barrio Logan site, that I'm in El Cajon, because I have learned so much more. Then I think I could have been like in a comfortable, like familiar spot. I've learned so much. And I want to keep growing in El Cajon. So yeah, that is something I really wanted to do is to be able to make a change and that I believe in the mission. And I really do believe in Barrio Logan's BLCI's mission.

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00:10:48.680 --> 00:10:58.673

Aiden Crowley: Yeah. And like me, even like going to volunteer over there. I could see that. And I see, like, you see how like the students like open up to you, it's really like it's really heartwarming.

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00:10:58.980 --> 00:11:00.675

Yasmin Renteria: I appreciate that.

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00:11:01.590 --> 00:11:13.499

Aiden Crowley: Yeah, so how have your like personal experiences like with the students like just everyday interactions like shape, your understanding of like identity, and like with race and stuff like that.

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00:11:13.812 --> 00:11:42.860

Yasmin Renteria: Yeah, so like, I told you, I originally thought was gonna be among familiar you know, cultural habits or cultural expectations and that kind of stuff things, you know, I even like in the area I grew up in Dallas it was like predominantly Hispanic, and so I always felt like I belonged, you know, thankfully. I never felt the odd one out or anything. I just was among people Spanish speaking people, people who understood like the culture we all had quinceañeras, as you know, like that kind of stuff. And so now in the in El Cajon, I and then, you know, I live in El Cajon, so it's really nice to be in the community and work in the community. But when my husband and I, you know, we rented this place from Dallas. We had no idea what the community looked. We had no idea like we just we got so lucky. This is such in the area I live it's so family friendly like. It's amazing. We love it here. And there's a lot of Middle Eastern people. And so there's like 2 kinds of Middle Eastern people, at least, that I've noticed. So we have the Chaldean People, which they're Christian, like Middle Eastern Christians. And then you have the Middle Eastern, who are Muslim. And so I, growing up, I wasn't really around Muslim people I unfortunately wasn't sure about Chaldean culture or anything like that so when we arrived here, I was like, Whoa like there's a bunch of rosaries everywhere, like in people's cars. I'm like, what is this? What's going on? I myself am Catholic, and so I immediately was like, I noticed those things. You know. I see those things, and then I think I believe my neighbor is Muslim, just from they participated in Ramadan. And so I'm just like, Wow, like, this is amazing. Like the food. You know, this food smell wafts over, and I'm like, Wow! That smells delicious. But how do I to answer your question, I've just learned so much about you know the similarities

really from cultures. So some of my students are Hispanic, like, I said. But so it's like almost 50/50 of Hispanic students and Middle Eastern students. And there's like as we talk about our home life or about you know what we did or what you know, what we do or how we do it. We are starting to find those little like intricacies, those little things that we're like. Wow! I do that, too, or, you know, cause Middle Eastern culture is obviously in the other side of the world. And they have Hispanic culture. That's a little closer to home. And so it's like certain things just go beyond proximity, right? Like certain things just go across cultures that you have no idea it could be similar like. And this is something I always talk about, because it tickles me so much so I don't know how it came up, but apparently Middle Eastern culture, at least the students that I work with a lot of them are Iraqi. They said that they also have, like the chancla right, the sandal in their culture, and so they call it the na'al. And so they're like, if I bring home bad grades from school, like I'll get the na'al right. The chancla. And I'm like, that's so funny cause it's also in our culture to like, get smacked with the chancla. You do something, you know you're not supposed to get back grades or whatever. So I just thought that was so funny. My students, they were like all laughing. And we were like Whoa in that small moment. And it's so it's so insignificant, right thing. It was so significant to us, because it brought us closer together in this like silly thing. So yeah, just like little things like that. They love to dance and party right middle Eastern culture. They dress up, they look so nice, and they have like this dance, and they go in a circle, and I'm like, Oh, my! I there's a name for it, but I don't recall and then so my students are like, Oh, my gosh, we also go in a circle. You know we love, We go to parties and la la la. So this is really nice. To see those similarities, and just like, and also the differences, you know and respect those differences like in the food. Oooh! That's another point. The food. So my, some of my students have never had like. I think it was mostly Middle Eastern students. They didn't know what mashed potatoes were. They didn't know what they tasted like they were like, not interested. And I was like mashed potatoes? I feel like that's such a like American food, you know that I feel like they would have had it either at school or I don't know when they were eating out.

so I was really surprised. And I was like, Well, I want you to try it, you know. Don't be scared to try new food, and although the kids are like we never had it like what? And so some of them ended up liking it. Some people it just wasn't their cup of tea, and I understand right. It's an interesting texture. If you didn't grow up with it. So yeah. Just the cuisine like yesterday, one of my parents, Hispanic parents they brought over. Sorry about that.

They brought over sorry they brought.

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00:16:05.160 --> 00:16:05.790

Aiden Crowley: No worries!

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00:16:06.142 --> 00:16:12.839

Yasmin Renteria: They're like flautas. So they're like these Taquitos. And they were. They're just tortilla filled with chicken. And some of my Middle Eastern students like my Hispanic students. They knew what that was. They immediately were like, yeah, they were down, you know. It was lettuce and sour cream, and they were like eating it up. My Middle Easterners were a little like, What is that like? I'm not sure. And I was like, I want you to just take a bite. You know I'm like at least try it. And then, if you don't like it, you don't like it. I'm not going to force you to eat it. But they were like gobbling them down. They fell in love. So I was like, you know, they're experiencing new new cuisines, too, and so I don't know. I was just like very happy that they're open to trying new things, and just learning from each other. And it's just amazing this job really has, like. you know. And then it's so beautiful cause children us are innocent that they're just kinda like navigating the world. And you, you know, as a adult, you have to like realize that they're just learning and experiencing new things. And so it's just beautiful to see that side. And and I hope that this experience will let them be more open-minded as they, as they grow older.

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00:17:13.540 --> 00:17:24.930

Aiden Crowley: That's awesome. I mean, yeah, navigating through like multiple cultures. That's like very interesting cause, I know, like with me and my family like my mom's side is like it, like Asian heritage, like Vietnamese.

and then, like my dad's side, is like Mexican.

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00:17:27.670 --> 00:17:28.239

Yasmin Renteria: (laughing)

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Aiden Crowley: So like, I feel like the whole like, I don't know. It's like a very. It's like a big like mixing pot. And like certain things are yeah, that are similar. Some things are different. That's why I kinda wanted to go with this next one. Since you do work with, like so many like cultures, have you taken, like certain things from certain and like, implemented, that in your own life.

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00:17:48.840 --> 00:17:52.460

Yasmin Renteria: Oh, that's interesting question. Implemented it in my own life. So a lot of my students speak, either Caldean or Arabic and I was like, I don't know that I can take on 2 languages, so I was like, I, at least want to learn some like pleasantries in Arabic, you know, so that I'm able to when I talk to a parent or anything, at least they feel like I'm trying that they feel welcomed and respected. So I've been trying to learn some Arabic like I started doing the Duolingo, you know, like Arabic, but it's teaching me like letters, and like certain sounds. And I'm like, I wanna get to the good part. The meeting part like how to say Hello, how to say, where is this, or how are you and that kind of stuff. And so Naima, which is the high school specialist. And our new assistant now, but also our previous assistant. They both speak Arabic, and so here and there I'll ask them like. or I'll recognize certain words, or I'll just, you know, like I caught on on certain things like what they mean. And so, yeah, I've been trying to implement that in my own life, in the sense of like learning new languages, cause I know Spanish. I know English. Obviously I learned like French and high school. I didn't really ever get a chance to implement that at all like, I don't know any French people. But now I'm like, if I learn Arabic like I have a community that I can speak to, that I can learn from. So I've been trying to do that and just learn more about their culture. Because I you know, I grew up like I told you in this little bubble of like Hispanic community. And so I I never really had to branch out as much until I went to college. I was around like people from India, people from Pakistan like that was amazing, learning about their cultures. And so now, now, this is a new culture. And I'm like, Oh, interesting, like, I know, I started asking them like, Do you guys celebrate like Eid? And they were like, no, I don't know. What's that? I'm like, Okay, well, that must be like, very specific to like India, or like this culture. And I'm like, so you know. And so I was just like learning to things, especially at the beginning. And now I'm like, Oh, okay, so this is that. And then my husband loves history and like he knows a lot about I. Unfortunately, history has never been my my number one thing like it's hard to stick in my head for some reason. So I'll ask him a question. He's like, Oh, yeah, this and that. And like, or any troubles between like cultures. And I'm like, Oh, it's good to know that, you know. There some of them have, you know, struggled with like. Yeah, and are still struggling, or why they move, because they're refugees from like terrorism. And that kind of stuff that that's a little sad and so just like know being empathetic from the the families that are refugees, and being just conscientious of like, how there might be some animosity, and like just trying to bridge the cultures and the families together. In this common goal, right of like success for their children, success for their families. So yeah, I've been trying to incorporate that trying to become more worldly myself, you know, like I expect that out of the students. And so I'm like, then I definitely need to be knowledgeable myself if I expected out of them. So yeah, that's something that I've done and incorporate into my life is just the language, and like the culture and just being conscientious and and knowledgeable.

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00:21:08.300 --> 00:21:18.760

Aiden Crowley: That's awesome for the for the language part like, how does that like your interactions with the students like, are they excited that you're learning and like, do they try to help you and like what else?

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00:21:18.760 --> 00:21:30.862

Yasmin Renteria: Yeah. And so I know you're there on on the third graders are always really eager to show me. I think they were telling me about. Well, I asked a particular student because we watched a book. We read a book from like storyline online. And it's it was a new book, and it was, I believe, I believe the they didn't specifically, explicitly say that they were Muslim, but they said something that one of my Muslim students brought up, and she was like, I think they're Muslim, and I'm like, why, and she's like well, she said, and I can't say the word, but they're like they said this. And they're like And that's something that we say. And I'm like, really. And she's like, Yeah, I'm like, what do? What does it mean? And she's kinda like trying to explain it. But she was having a hard time, because I think it's more of like you understand it. If you speak the language, you know, it's like a meaning. I think it's like wishing someone well like by God's grace or something, you know, kinda something like that and and so it is really interesting to that. She recognized it. And to me it just went over my head, you know, because I I was like, maybe half paying attention to the story, making sure the students were paying attention, walking around doing this and that. So yeah, the students are definitely eager. I'll like.

you know, in Spanish, like, if I'm wanting them to hurry up like, come on, let's go. We can see like "Vamonos", or like "Come on" you know, in English, let's go. And then in Arabic is Yala. Yala means like, Let's go. Let's go, you know. And so if I if they're kind of lagging, they're kind of slow, I'll just start saying Yala, like Yala go, come on, and that's when they kind of start picking up their things. And they're like, Okay, she's being serious. So I think they appreciate when I and they see my effort, you know, and I think they appreciate it. I hope they do. So yeah, I try to.

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00:23:11.780 --> 00:23:13.239

Aiden Crowley: Yeah, that's awesome. That's awesome. What is your favorite aspect of BLCI like working there for a while? Like, what would you say is your favorite thing.

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Yasmin Renteria: I just, you know, and I, as I told you earlier, I did my masters in teaching, and so I taught for 2 years in in Texas before moving to San Diego. And so I just love being with the students, you know, like in my, you know, hope is to one day move up the ladder or whatever. But I'm just like I'm going to miss being with the students like. It's just so precious. You know, those moments that you have those laughs that you have with them. I think as of right now. I I just wanna say that, like my favorite aspect is just being with the students and being with the students, not just like learning, like teaching them, but actually being like in this comfortable space of like. I'm going at your pace, you know. I want to get to know you as a person, and I want you to get to know me as a person, and not having, like that like the state, breathing down my neck with like report cards and like state tests. And all of that, you know.

Unfortunately, that's something teachers have to deal with like the district. You know what they want, what they like, all these things. They're shoving down your throat when you're a teacher. I feel like I can go at the students pace, go on my own pace and get to know students really, well, really develop a relationship with them. And and then just being a community together, you know? I think I really appreciate that about this job, about what BLCI is. I think anyone anyone who works for BLCI. I will tell you like it's the community because we're all there, and we all care about each other because we really take the time to get to know one another. So I think that's my favorite aspect is like those relationships that I've I've built with the students. And and really, actually, so the third graders, they're new this year, right? Because we start in third grade. But my current fourth and fifth graders. I had them last year. So like being able to see them grow.

And it's like the same class. And then we add, like new students as we fill in those spots in the classroom. It's like, just been really a a pleasure. And like I treasure that being able to see the students again seeing them grow, and like next year, you know, they'll be moving on my fifth graders. I had them in fourth grade. I had them in fifth grade, and next year they'll be moving onto the middle school program, which will be the middle school specialists now. And so it was sad also, my fifth graders last year. I still see them right? But I'm not with them anymore. But they come and hug me. They say, Hi, how are you doing like I miss you, and I'm like, I miss you, too. I hope you're doing well in middle school. So it's like that, I built those relationships, and I hope that they continue as they get older and hopefully one day go

to college, and and I get to say I was a little piece of that.

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00:26:11.600 --> 00:26:15.850

Aiden Crowley: Right. It's like a it's like your own little like family away from family right.

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00:26:15.850 --> 00:26:17.409

Yasmin Renteria: Yes, for sure.

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00:26:17.410 --> 00:26:18.710

Aiden Crowley: It's very fulfilling.(slight pause)

So what what lesson would you say like?

I don't know that you've learned throughout all this that, like other people like would benefit from.

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00:26:29.510 --> 00:26:30.790

Yasmin Renteria: A lesson.

I would say.

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00:26:33.260 --> 00:26:35.860

Aiden Crowley: Or just like advice, something like that.

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00:26:35.860 --> 00:26:45.410

Yasmin Renteria: Yeah, I would say, I've always been pretty open person, open to new experiences open to learning

and I would say, that is something that I think has helped me in this job. I know one of my coworkers who is Muslim, and she grew up in The United Arab Emirates. One of my coworkers, she wrote recently in a note in like a card as she wrote to me. She was like, Thank you for like being open and willing to learn about my culture, you know, and I'm like, you notice that, you know. Like to me. I was just being me, and like curious and like, wanna know more. And like, wanna know about people's experiences and their background and all that? I'm just curious. I'm just a curious person. And so I think that curiosity like don't let it die in your childhood, you know. Let your curiosity like go into your adulthood, and always be willing and and open to learn more. And that's what I would say, cause it's just like everyone's so interesting. You know, everyone's so interesting in their own way. And so I think, just having that curiosity. That child like curiosity, I think, will make life more interesting. So that's I guess my my suggestion for people.