

[00:00:00.650] - Keenashae Pennicooke

This is for the oral interview for the project. I'm Keenashae Pennicooke. I'm a freshman here at Sewanee, and I'll be interviewing you. Would you like to share your names and the year that you graduated?

[00:00:15.240] - Asia Baysa

Yes, I'm Asia Baysah, formerly Watson, and I graduated in 2007.

[00:00:22.130] - Justin Smith

I'm Justin Smith, graduated in class as of 2010.

[00:00:27.450] - Bakari Holley

I am Bakari Holly. Formerly Bakari Faulkner, class of 2010.

[00:00:33.050] - Keenashae Pennicooke

So the importance of these oral interviews are to get your perspective on what Sewanee was like then and how you made your way. So one of the questions is, can you share a story or stories that stand out in your memory about how you made your way at Sewanee?

[00:00:49.550] - Bakari Holley

Ladies first.

[00:00:51.390] - Asia Baysa

Well, I found Sewanee through my high school, the Galloway School in Atlanta, Georgia. My principal of the school, Gordon Mathis, was a Sewanee alumni. And when I was a junior in high school, he told me about a program in math and science here at Sewanee called the Bridge Program, that I should apply for it. So I applied, and I got in, spent the summer between junior and senior year of high school at Sewanee learning math and science, and then applied, got in, and ended up attending. I would have never even known about the school on this beautiful plateau. But for Gordon Mathis and the Bridge Program.

[00:01:35.470] - Bakari Holley

For me it's a football journey. So in high school, I was pretty decent football player. I wanted to play at the next level. But unfortunately, my coaches at my school did not do anything to help me achieve that dream. So this is back in 2006. Technology is nothing like it now, so I had to put together tapes, just do a whole bunch of stuff that was completely foreign to me in order to get a recruiting package out to the school that I thought I could probably either walk on to or make it at Via Scholarship. And unfortunately, none of it worked out. So I was just kind of lost, just waiting on certain applications to go out based on my academics, because I was still a good student. One of my brother's close friends happened to be working in admissions here in Sewanee, and he said, well, what are your brother's test scores? So once he told me my test scores, he was like, no, he needs to be a Sewanee. No, that's great. So he had me come out. I put in an application. I did a visit. It just so happened to be one of the weakest times to come to Sewanee, because there was nobody here during spring break.

[00:02:54.390] - Bakari Holley

And I love the campus. I think that if people had been here, I would not have been able to absorb how beautiful, how quiet, how serene, and how focused the campus is. And later in life, I was diagnosed as ADHD. And it was particularly important that I made that decision then, not knowing that I was ADHD, because if I had gone somewhere else that was more busy, I never would have finished and I never would have had the experience with the people that I met here, because I've just been all over the place. So really coming to Sewanee saved me from a lot of heartache and trauma. No matter what I eventually would experience, good or bad, it was kind of random and kind of kismet, but I wouldn't change it.

[00:03:46.570] - Justin Smith

And then for me, the story was similar to Bakari's in that a former classmate of mine came to Sewanee before me, and also my coaches kind of said, hey, why don't you take a visit? Or just look,

because out of high school, I was a D one prospect, so I could have took the same journey as Bakari. Still had to make my own tape, send them out. Internet wasn't as popping back then, so I did that, got a few offers and things of that nature. So it was PWI or predominantly white institution or HBCU, historically black. I chose Sewanee because I want to do something different. I'm from Decatur, Georgia. Specifically from Atlanta. Literally. And I figured I already had the city experience going home, so for school, I wanted to try something different. So I said I'll take a chance on Sewanee with it being on the mountain, kind of having that esoteric population in terms of when I'm out at the grocery store, people say or see a Sewanee shirt, they say, oh, you went to Sewanee? Oh, my God, you must be really smart. So I kind of took that and ran with it and was like, yeah, I could go to UGA., Georgia Tech and be at home in my comfort zone, but I wanted to push myself.

[00:05:18.390] - Justin Smith

And so coming to Sewanee, being a true minority, that I could see when I came in 2006, along with Bakari, although I was kind of insulated with the football team, going to class with more wealthier, more affluent classmates and interacting with them, that helped me to build my character for later in life.

[00:05:45.460] - Bakari Holley  
Absolutely.

[00:05:46.300] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Yeah. College is like, an imperative part when development occurs. You meet so much different people, and for both of you, it's different coming in. Right. So it's like something a little different coming in. You fell in love with the campus. You wanted something different. You decided, like, yeah, I'm going to come isolate myself with these people. It's going to be great. With all these trees and bushes surrounding me, it's going to be amazing.

[00:06:13.110] - Bakari Holley

And that's totally Justin literally will throw himself into the most uncomfortable circumstance, and you will not know that he's uncomfortable. He'll just be chilling.

[00:06:23.270] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Yeah, but it builds character, though, right? Definitely. So what were your first impressions of Sewanee? You came for, like, math, studying the-

[00:06:33.630] - Asia Baysa

Summer program in high school, my first impression of Sewanee was that it was beautiful. I mean, this campus speaks for itself during that summer, and there was so much to do. I know you're thinking, what is there.

[00:06:47.590] - Keenashae Pennicooke

To do on campus?

[00:06:48.710] - Asia Baysa

But you have to think like, high school student, high school program. During the summer, we went Caving. I don't know if you know that there are caves around Sewanee campus and you literally can go Caving. We went Caving, and we did the Trail, all the people in the program, and it was just a very serene and peaceful summer of learning. So my first impression was there's so much to do on the beautiful campus, and it's peaceful to find out there.

[00:07:17.810] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Not that much to do up here. As a student, you make fun, definitely.

[00:07:24.500] - Bakari Holley

Yeah. For me, my first time coming up here, as I mentioned before, during spring break, so there was nothing going on. I met with admission staff and I also met with Jessica Cardi, so she talked me through that meeting with her, like, having that meeting with her before I made any decisions about

coming here was crucial because she was able to be honest with me to an extent that admission may not be able to. So she was like, listen, there's not going to be a whole lot to do once you go to one Sewanee party. You have been to most Sewanee party, but if you are looking for somewhere where you can add a quality education and supplement your intellect, this is a great place to be. She was telling me about some of the opportunities she has set up for herself. Coming from where I was coming from, where there was not a lot of opportunity for someone who looks like me, a black kid, six three, and everybody thinks, oh, some type of sport. That was encouraging because it was like, I can come here and I can build myself outside of the football field.

[00:08:41.220] - Bakari Holley

And of course, I met our goofy coach. Correct. He cracked me up the first time I met him. He was a good dude with a good spirit. And I had been around coaches who had no good intentions for anybody, no matter what you look like. They just wanted to use and abuse us. So meeting him was refreshing, just knowing that not all coaches are built the same. And then like Asia mentioned, like I mentioned before, the campus is beautiful. One of my favorite things to do was to just find a random spot somewhere on this campus and sit down and just read, because nobody's going to mess with you. It's going to be quiet and you can just go through your thoughts. If you're trying to piece together a paper, you can piece through your ideas. Everybody's doing the same thing, so nobody's going to mess with you. So that was wonderful. And as far as us being surrounded by a whole bunch of white folks, I came from a school that was just like that, except they were, you know, they drove monster trucks and, you know, bailed hay so it it wasn't that part of it wasn't very different for me.

[00:09:51.070] - Bakari Holley

I was very used to being kind of the outlier. But the most important thing to me was that there were people who looked like me, who thought like me, who had very similar experiences to me, like Justin, that I could pair with and see my way through that. Because even at that age, without being able to articulate it, at 18, I understood inherently that that was going to be important in order for me to get what I needed from a place like Sewanee.

[00:10:23.110] - Justin Smith

And for me, I came on probably the direct opposite weekend he did. I was here during spring semester, and there were ample amount of parties, so I stayed with football players. We went out that night, stayed out, had a great time. But when I came to campus, I was kind of indifferent. I was like, it's nice buildings and whatever, but I was here to get an education and play some ball. So to me, it was just going to college. I wasn't particularly worried about how I would interact with anybody because I went to school in a pretty big metropolitan area. I had a job, worked outside of school and did all those things so I could assimilate myself in pretty much different scenarios.

[00:11:22.010] - Keenashae Pennicooke

So we all had quite different experiences. But both of you had, like, the first impression of so many ones. It was serene in nature's. Isolating oh, this is so nice. This would help me focus. It helped you develop, like, outside characteristics outside of just playing football. So you all had holistic development, which is great builds character, right? So I did PRE, which is orientation program where you do caving you do hiking.

[00:11:52.050] - Asia Baysa

Is it in the summer?

[00:11:53.310] - Keenashae Pennicooke

It is a few days before school.

[00:11:57.490] - Asia Baysa

The campus is empty.

[00:11:58.920] - Keenashae Pennicooke

The campus is, yes. And I was, like, signing off for it. I was just like, well, I'm going to be isolated on the mountain. I'm going to start hiking. I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. And then I came, and

I absolutely hated it. It was not for me. I do not like being outside. The bugs were out there. I was miserable. But I did make friends. I did get to see another part of Sewanee because I had also come here during spring break and the campus was empty, and I felt indifferent about it. I was just like, okay, buildings. Okay, I'm just going to come here. It's good ratings academically. And that was one of the things I was most focused on. So you came in with the intention of studying.

[00:12:45.750] - Asia Baysa  
Math?

[00:12:46.430] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Math.

[00:12:47.050] - Asia Baysa  
I came in with the intention of studying math. I did not end up being a math major.

[00:12:53.190] - Asia Baysa  
I think Calculus three hit. What is this? And then I ended up doing psychology, which I love. Okay, yeah, I came up with the intention, but that was not the reality.

[00:13:03.470] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
You major in? Psychology.

[00:13:04.770] - Asia Baysa  
Psychology.

[00:13:05.350] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
And what about you, too? Did you figure out what exactly you wanted to study major while you were here?

[00:13:12.510] - Justin Smith  
This is Justin. I was econ. Knew I was going to do something in finance, bar none. Like, I came into college knowing my plan. I just needed the piece of paper.

[00:13:26.450] - Asia Baysa  
And you got it.

[00:13:28.370] - Bakari Holley  
I came in not really having an idea and just figuring that I would do Econ and just do something, like, just with that, just straight up, so I can go into the corporate world, get some type of job. Had no idea what that job was going to be. Had no plan. Like, Justin complete opposite with that. It's crazy. Best friend. We have opposite ideas, but I guess that's why we vibe so much, because we can bounce things off of each other. So when I came in, I thought, econ major, yada, yada yada. Did econ 101. No, sir. No, sir. My mind just didn't work the right way with the graphs. Supply and demand. I understood the concepts okay.

[00:14:11.280] - Bakari Holley  
The graph part was not it. And then the math major, my soul left my body so many times in calculus, I had to take it twice, and I hated all of it. So I was like, no, I can't keep doing this. And part of the reason I wanted to be an Econ major is because I was trying to do something that my dad, I think, wanted to do more than I did because he was a very intelligent guy, business oriented. I think that he kind of wished that if he could have gone back school, he'd had the opportunity to do, like, an Econ major at a PWI or something like that, and he would gauge him some different avenues. So I was trying to meet that expectation for him. But by the time I got a sophomore year and that wasn't working, I was like, I'm lost. And then, thank God, Inez Anders, she will not be here this weekend, but Inez, you ever hear this? I love you to death. She grabbed me, and she took me to see Professor Roberson. And I told him I didn't want to be a dusty historian. And he looked at me and said, if you think that that's all you can do with a history degree or an American Studies degree, I have news for

you.

[00:15:39.560] - Bakari Holley

You can be so much more. And they saved me. They saved me for myself. So I wound up graduating in American city with concentration in African african studies. Every step of my career, every step of my life, anything that I've accomplished is directly attributed to the things that I learned sitting in Roberson's office and with Professor Whittier. Edgy. Without them, I'd be lost. Sorry, Terry.

[00:16:21.410] - Asia Baysa

But it's real. Don't apologize for tearing up. It's real.

[00:16:25.010] - Keenashae Pennicooke

And it's kind of why we've built the Roberson Project in honor of the same he was here when we installed it, did it to come because he meant so much to so much black alone here. Right. And we can see that having someone a part of the student body, especially at the PWI predominantly white institution, is so imperative to knowing that we have someone that looks like us, who understands us, who feels the same way we do, and they're looking out for us, too. I didn't have that experience. We did have a vice chancellor, but then he was shipped off just as soon as I was coming in. They were like, yeah, no. Bye. But having good figures, especially as a student here, students say all the time that it's your professors that made the major, and that's exactly it. You might just get into a class coming like, oh, yeah, I'm going to do a math major. And then your professor, your psych professor is amazing. And you were just like, wow, I'm in love with this, and end up changing your direction in life forever. And you can't imagine what would have happened if you didn't take that class, if you didn't go to that office hour with that professor, if you didn't see them, and let's talk to them.

[00:17:39.460] - Keenashae Pennicooke

You know what I mean? Thank you so much for sharing that. It's a very good story. Most definitely. And are there any other stories that you'd like to share about your experience here at Sewanee? Maybe a weekend, wannatalk about it? Your classes? What were you guys involved in? What did you do apart on campus? I know you said you went Caving. Did you get a chance to do that?

[00:18:06.330] - Asia Baysa

That as a student? Absolutely not.

[00:18:09.110] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Yeah, part of that program, high school.

[00:18:13.500] - Asia Baysa

Where they made everyone go Caving. But I was part of really dance here. Petro Motion. I started the Tiger Girl Dance team. I was founder of that. And so back then, we only danced for basketball. I think now they do football as well, cheerleading. These guys play every weekend when I was a senior, so I was more involved in dance and cheerleading. Sorority. Campus life.

[00:18:45.990] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Okay.

[00:18:46.610] - Asia Baysa

Campus life. I feel like there's a bunch of other things, and now I can't remember one main thing I did, and you should look into this if they still do it. Outreach trips. So every spring break, we did outreach trips, and I went to Miami twice and then Ecuador once.

[00:19:01.400] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Yes. So there's actually a trip being led by one of our juniors this spring break.

[00:19:07.530] - Asia Baysa

Only one trip?

[00:19:08.850] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Only one trip. Well, there's one. To New Orleans, I believe.

[00:19:14.110] - Asia Baysa  
That's interesting. Back in my day, they had, like, ten it was like, everywhere. Ecuador, Miami, or the other places. Like Dixon. Dixon. He's not here anymore. He used to just pick pockets and cities and outreach and different staff would sleep outreach trips. Yeah, that's what I was involved in. I remember student life more than I do my classes. And to be honest with you.

[00:19:38.370] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
How would you describe it?

[00:19:42.150] - Asia Baysa  
They called AAA back then. African American alliance. Now.

[00:19:45.030] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
It's called the BSU.

[00:19:46.850] - Asia Baysa  
BSU. Right. But AAA, I think I was vice president when the Anthony was president a lot too. It was good, good times.

[00:20:00.890] - Bakari Holley  
It's funny we all doing this together. Me and Justin got introduced to a lot of campus life because of Asia and her class. Because they were seniors when we came in. So they were pushing us to do stuff, looking us like we were idiots, just helping us get integrated with being here. So me and Justin, we were in football. So that's majority of time that's what we were doing. We were outside on that field sweating, leaving, beating on each other and they being like what you want to eat? That was a huge part of the experience here. Of course, African American life became a big part of what we did because it gave us a sense of unity. Fellowship once a week we did our meetings. We did parties with AAA as well.

[00:20:49.770] - Asia Baysa  
Parties at the House Multiculture center.

[00:21:01.470] - Bakari Holley  
We were heavily involved with that. Eventually we started Sewanee Praise at the end of our freshman year. So that became a staple for those of us who continued after that Asian class graduate. They got some special thing. It wasn't a whole lot, but we carried that forward. It's one of these two. Well, it lasted longer than we thought it would.

[00:21:32.860] - Asia Baysa  
Graduated, right.

[00:21:36.890] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Is this like a choir kind of?

[00:21:39.840] - Bakari Holley  
Yes. Gospel praise choir.

[00:21:42.150] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Okay, so there is still a choir, but there is no gospel choir.

[00:21:48.510] - Bakari Holley  
The college choir.

[00:21:49.780] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Yeah, the college choir. It wasn't no.

[00:21:53.150] - Bakari Holley

We sang gospel. Saying the gospel. So we would travel we sang here on campus. We travel to local churches because we come to a Presbyterian college. But a lot of us are Baptists, Methodists. The way we sing our songs is very different. So that also gave us another sense of fellowship because we're able to share that with each other. That commonality of experience. So Sewanee Praise was amazingly productive for us like that especially those of us who got here didn't necessarily want to be a church thing every Sunday. Yeah, like I get my church in every now and then and I can go be a bum the rest of my Sunday. So Sewanee praise was huge. If somebody's listening and they want to restart it, do it. Do it.

[00:22:46.750] - Keenashae Pennicooke

I'm sorry. I think there would be a real need for it here because I remember people, black students especially who wanted to apply for the choir and then fell out of it shortly afterwards. It was just not what they were used to. It's not that they're familiar with and it's like the same what do they call it? Like choruses or hymns? Every eventually they get burnt out. It wasn't exactly what they pictured what they were used to. So I think that would be a good thing to create for a sense of community. Like the BSU right now. Well, the name was changed. Include students like me who are not exactly African American or African, but the Caribbean, because we have a good mix here now and then. But I still think that it shares it provides community for students here. Even if we're mad at each other, we're going to start talking again because we're a few black students on campus and we need to stick together. But you can continue.

[00:23:49.990] - Asia Baysa

I was going to say that's the beautiful thing, especially with Bakari's story, that's the beautiful thing about Sewanee is that if you have an interest, gospel music, dance for me, you can start it. You can find a professor who's going to what do they call it? Sponsor or whatever. Professor kind of look over it and you can start whatever your interest is and so on. Supports that and gives you the resources. And I know they gave Tiger Girl dance team a lot of money. We had like four outfits for the whole I know, I know. Same for Sewanee Praise. Likely the resources to travel to the different churches.

[00:24:27.630] - Bakari Holley

Yeah. I mean, fans, shirts. We eventually got multicolored shirts. I came back a couple of years later, they had gowns. I was like, Right, can I come back?

[00:24:41.170] - Asia Baysa

That's a beautiful thing. If you have an interest, they what's what I'm looking for. They nurture it and you get to do it. You're not afraid to start something because you have the support.

[00:24:52.010] - Bakari Holley

Oh, yeah. Besides Sewanee praise, I also participated in Acapella scene group called Rescue. So that was a thing, too.

[00:25:00.680] - Asia Baysa

Can you sing for us right now?

[00:25:02.730] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Oh, does it help it out? I'll be the back up. Okay. What you want? Actually, it's very necessary that I listen to everyone saying it's mandate. Did you not read the consent form? It was honest.

[00:25:23.250] - Bakari Holley

My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord he has trampled out the vintage where the breaks of wrath were sorted like it. I'm such a dad now. I'm out of practice.

[00:25:36.230] - Keenashae Pennicooke

beautiful

[00:25:46.730] - Asia Baysa

Your child is lucky that you actually can sing, yeah.

[00:25:50.480] - Bakari Holley

But I was in rescue. It was me, Bexter Richardson, John Ugorgi and Calvin. And then eventually, unfortunately, Calvin had to leave. So there was just me, Bexter and John. We kind of kept it going. So we had songs that became songs that he's produced and made now that we're all old, but he had songs that he wrote. We remixed some stuff. We did some old school gossip songs, too. I did a lot of things on this campus. I'm sure there's more than a few professionals that remember that. And of course, Outreach trips, just like Asia. I did Miami twice. I wish I had gone to some other cities, though, because I didn't fully value how incredible that type of travel can be for your experience and your mindset. So I wish I had done a few more of the cities that we offered at the time, especially now. They don't offer. That's crazy.

[00:27:01.920] - Asia Baysa

That's crazy. Ecuador was every year, and Nixon actually led Myerson. Myerson led the Ecuador.

[00:27:08.860] - Bakari Holley

Dixon Myers.

[00:27:09.500] - Asia Baysa

Dixon Myers. His office was right here in the DC.

[00:27:14.150] - Bakari Holley

Go talking about any of trips, any cave, anything. Sergeant, you good.

[00:27:23.370] - Justin Smith

And outside of all of that, I was a legal hustler back then, so I did everything from there was something called Book Fool back then, where they buy books and all that type of stuff.

[00:27:38.210] - Bakari Holley

He put me on.

[00:27:39.570] - Justin Smith

Me and BK used to drive shuttles back and forth to Nashville.

[00:27:43.540] - Asia Baysa

Oh, no, not by me.

[00:27:45.730] - Justin Smith

Well, under Ms. Barbara in the student center, we come pick up students from Nashville. And we could do that because at the time, Georgia licenses were better than everybody else's because we could drive 15 passenger vans. So we did that.

[00:28:06.710] - Bakari Holley

Everybody was so jealous, though. We didn't have to do any of the tests. We just by Georgia license hit.

[00:28:13.670] - Keenashae Pennicooke

What was the Ride like? Who had the aux? What kind of music were we bumping?

[00:28:21.050] - Justin Smith

I don't think we think we had Aux back then because it was old.

[00:28:23.840] - Keenashae Pennicooke

The CDs



[00:28:24.860] - Asia Baysa  
we had CDs definitely when I know how there was CDs and desktop.

[00:28:30.110] - Bakari Holley  
It was mostly radio. We didn't have the convenience of today. There was no bluetooth. There was no aux. If you had an aux cord attached to a cassette tape. But now you need CDs. And if you didn't have CDs, like, if you were driving a diverse crowd I'm just putting on something general. I would be lost. It was a bunch of white chicks, which I listen to. Now we can listen to your music. What was that, 2008?

[00:29:09.020] - Asia Baysa  
Nelly. Was that before 2008?

[00:29:12.880] - Bakari Holley  
Nelly? Would would have have been 2000 when.

[00:29:14.460] - Asia Baysa  
I was in school. Nelly.

[00:29:15.860] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Yeah.

[00:29:18.750] - Bakari Holley  
So like that old man.

[00:29:28.910] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Go on.

[00:29:29.470] - Asia Baysa  
Spotify or Amazon music if you they're on it. And make sure you pray before you.

[00:29:33.520] - Bakari Holley  
Listen to that, but then start with vice versa. So that was big for the football team because a bunch of us from Georgia and we all love Pat. If you're from Georgia and you grew up in that time, that's Pastro was it

[00:29:55.050] - Asia Baysa  
Ciera was popular. One two step.

[00:30:03.850] - Bakari Holley  
Ciera was popular. Missy Elliot was still putting out songs, every soft and but she was starting to slow down. Emily was still putting out stuff with Justin Timberlake. Man, listen to so much music. Drake released. So far gone our junior year. That mixtape was it, let me see, Lupe Fiasco. Oh, man, this jam out Fiasco, gorilla Zoe. I don't know if Alfonso ever listened to this, but man, we jam is a gorilla Zoe. Man, my speakers got shattered. Some things are terrible. Yeah, there was some pretty decent music back then. It hadn't turned into mumble rap, but music from the south was outcast. Was still that deal. I mean RCA, TI, luke Chris.

[00:31:02.830] - Asia Baysa  
Also work study.

[00:31:03.860] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Did you guys do work study?

[00:31:05.100] - Asia Baysa  
I forgot about work study was a big thing for college. I worked at the daycare. First I put it the library and I fell asleep and then I did the Daycare. Is that still open?

[00:31:13.680] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Yeah, the Daycare is still open.

[00:31:16.290] - Asia Baysa  
I think it was 8 hours a week. And then I ended up doing the BC with Miss Barbara.

[00:31:21.110] - Justin Smith  
And I worked at facilities, and we was popping over time facilities, so like, everybody who do the grounds and stuff, the building down here. So I was all over, had the golf cart and everything. He'd be like, my worst day.

[00:31:43.450] - Asia Baysa  
That's hilarious. I didn't know you did.

[00:31:45.340] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Yeah, now they give the golf cart to me now because I'm an Arcadian, which is like a tour guide. And I drive around, I'm like, oh, this is this. And my friends wave at me. I'm like, because I can't really drive yet. Music is one of the things that is really connecting us now. Sewanee I can talk about the radio station. It was recently reopened by a black student here, and they restarted the work study program there. And they're thinking of putting back the radio station and having DJs come in. People applied, volunteer to be DJs. So we have a Ralston listening room in the library. Even where students volunteer, they just go in and they play whatever songs they want. The room is really nice. They spent a lot of money on that room. So it is like very high quality. The music that's coming into ears.

[00:32:45.350] - Asia Baysa  
They going to let students have radio shows? I had a radio show, legacia Show.

[00:32:51.030] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Oh, and what is that?

[00:32:53.730] - Asia Baysa  
It was Leonora joy Asia. Right now. It's called the Legacia Show. We're like, Talk to me now. And we had a radio show once a week and we would just talk on this. So they should have students.

[00:33:13.450] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
I definitely hope they implement that. Right now they're trying to get like, DJs to come on air and stuff. That's great.

[00:33:25.870] - Asia Baysa  
I'm just completely normal.

[00:33:27.690] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Yeah. Anything else that you were involved in maybe?

[00:33:34.030] - Justin Smith  
So, yeah. Speaking of the hustles, besides driving the van and stuff, there was this list serve. I think I stumbled on it one day. I think I might have even been through admissions. But I was looking for more cash flow. And so it was kind of the old school Task Rabbit. You all know that app. Okay, so in bigger cities, there's Task Rabbit, where everyday people, whoever has a special skill signs up and you put your skills out for bid or you can do jobs for people. So I did that in Sewanee. So I know one time I was off a high tower road, I was cleaning some guys gutter. Huge liability, really. They probably wouldn't let people do it now, but I loved it back then. I was. Taking hell of risk.

[00:34:25.310] - Asia Baysa  
They paid you cash?

[00:34:29.070] - Justin Smith  
It was sewanee resident, right?

[00:34:32.530] - Asia Baysa  
I didn't even know that existed.

[00:34:33.960] - Bakari Holley  
Insurance.

[00:34:39.590] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
What about little things you do on the side? I know one. I'm like the Sewanee hairdresser. I grow on braiding hair, twisting hair, retwisting locks. I've learned it all.

[00:34:52.150] - Asia Baysa  
That was me. For the guys that had braids, I would braid their hair pretty much once a week. All of them?

[00:34:58.280] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Yeah.

[00:34:59.370] - Bakari Holley  
Good on you.

[00:35:02.990] - Asia Baysa  
They didn't pay.

[00:35:04.300] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Oh, I get paid. We do have, like, two barbers right now, and one of them is transferring, so we're gonna load it up.

[00:35:16.580] - Asia Baysa  
Yeah, the hair is a thing.

[00:35:21.310] - Bakari Holley  
On the schedule.

[00:35:25.890] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
My last question is, who made a difference? If you could attribute it in your life as we already touched on it a little bit before there's anything anyone you could specifically attribute,

[00:35:36.890] - Justin Smith  
I'll pop off on this one. So for me, I was an econ major, and I think one of the most influential professors was Professor Mohitan, who has since moved on from the university. But she did kind of outreach trips during spring break. So while I did the Miami trip twice, I believe in my junior senior year, I went with Professor Mahitan to Dominican Republic, and we learned about a program called Esperanza. So it was a microfinance program, and Dominican Republic is kind of a Third World country. So with Picard saying that he wish he would have experienced certain things, that was one of my most profound experiences in that. Yes, we stayed in a hotel in Santo Domingo, but during the day, we were in deep into the countryside in terms of we learned about the colorism down there, and if you're a darker skin tone, you're treated differently. And coming from America, living in the south, like, I understand all that, and fair skinned Dominicans ain't really feeling Haitians, and there's a real tension there. And it's like in some of the parts we were in, you could see the despair on some of the Haitian faces who had come over the border to Dominican Republic and were just living that rough lifestyle.

[00:37:11.770] - Justin Smith  
And trips like that kind of molded me into being appreciative for the status that I have in life and kind

of not looking down on certain people, because even if you're at the lowest rung in America, some people have no idea what it's like to live in a stone house with no electricity or first World problems. And I think a lot of people need that experience to broaden their horizon and broaden their scope. It's like today we're too focused on the politics of who's spending more or race and all that other stuff, and it's a lot of other things that are more important. So, yes, I look at life through a financial lens, but at the same time, I look at it through humanity as well. And so Professor Mahiton, even though she taught macroeconomics, that trip was one of the most profound things that kind of guided me to where I am now.

[00:38:21.690] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Thank you so much for sharing.

[00:38:26.990] - Bakari Holley  
So probably the person who had the biggest influence on me was Houston Roberson. I'm going to tell a story from a different angle. Do they still assign mentors for your first year?

[00:38:44.400] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
No, they don't. For the first year, you were assigned, like, an advisor to help you with your classes, and then eventually you choose your own advisor based on your major.

[00:38:55.340] - Bakari Holley  
Okay. Yes, Armand? I use the wrong terminology. So my first assigned advisor was Professor Smith. He's retired now. The guy had a completely shredded Robe that he would never replace. He's a classic guy, but I can't remember exactly the name of the class, but basically he would just take us out and walk us all across his campus and tell us this historical significance. So I learned the value through him of looking beneath the surface of monitor, which was so much more fundamentally impactful than I really understood at that time. So when it came time for me to choose another advisor, I told him that, like I mentioned before, I want to be a recon major, and I really needed to find an advisor that could kind of get me going on the right track with that. So he assigned me. He told me that probably my best bet was Judy Cunningham. She was the wife of the Vice Chancellor at that time. and she was one of the calculus professors, so she probably helped me get on that. So assigned to Trudy, God bless her, she wanted to help me so badly, but because she didn't have an understanding of my perspective on life and how confused I was and how to address that, instead of talking to me, getting to know me a little bit and being like, you've got the brain of a historian.

[00:40:45.860] - Bakari Holley  
Herb solution was to throw me in several different places and see what stuck like pieces of spaghetti. So I did a comp sci class. I did her calculus class. I did so many random electives that I wound up wasting time with electives. So after I spoke to Professor Roberson the first time with Inez and I had spoken to Trudy, and she laid out this Grandmaster plan for me for my degree, I just felt defeated. I just really wasn't feeling it because I told her, I really think I can be American Studies major. She's like, no. She told me no. And she told me, I think you should do this, because she figured out too late that I was looking for direction. So I felt defeated. I felt like she meant well, but she really didn't have what it took to really guide me where I needed to go. So I went and sat down with Professor Roberson, and I cried in his office. I just said, I got an advisor who just doesn't hear me. She doesn't understand. And I know, it's not because she doesn't care, but she just doesn't get it. And he listened to me, and he let me cry, and he let me go through everything, like, just tell him about my life.

[00:42:16.000] - Bakari Holley  
And he said, I'm going to take you over to the registrar's office. I'm going to be your advisor, and I'm going to make it so that you not only graduate, but you graduate on time the way you want to. Because I was also facing a situation financially where I might have to go home. And part of Trudy solution was you just work in Atlanta for a summer. And I was like, at that time, I lived in Atlanta. I was in Athens, but there was no opportunities for me because all I did was apply for jobs in the summer, and nobody would ever call or ever say anything. So she she just didn't get it. So yet again, you put his man cape on it. He came and saved me. Like, he he got me signed up to be for for him to be my advisor. He signed me up for summer school. He said, you can come to some school, do this class

with me. I want you to pick other classes that kind of pique your interest. I did a Greek mythology class this summer, which was fantastic, with Professor McDonough, wherever you are, McDonough, God love you.

[00:43:31.940] - Bakari Holley

I'll hit you up on Facebook, but that class is a lot of fun, too. So that was one of my two classes for the summer. But, I mean, every step of my way in making it through this university, no matter what I had going on. At one point, I was president of AAA, and a lot of the conflicts that we were talking about before was getting to me, and I just didn't know how to manage. And I would go sit in his office, and he would commiserate, and he would be like, it's okay, here's what you do. And he would have steps from your follow. And not that I didn't have advice to get from my parents. My parents were first generation college students, so they understood some of the struggles, but they were older. They were baby boomers. So there was some context they just didn't have. And because he was right there, he was able to give me that context that I needed in order to get without Houston Roberson, I never would have gotten out of this place. I wouldn't be where I am today without my wife, without my baby, without him, I wouldn't have made it.

[00:44:38.180] - Bakari Holley

We still would have been friends. Justin.

[00:44:43.540] - Asia Baysa

Without your beautiful wife and child, it's just him. For me, it was definitely Lisa Howwick. And Barbara Banks was not professors. Lisa Howwick brought me to admitted students weekend in, like, a 15 pastor band that's a theme from Atlanta to Tennessee. This is after the Ritual bands. I remember Jaime Chavez was in the van with us. Lenore Cook was in the band now editing her on. And there were, like, other students that got admitted from Atlanta. And it was just she brought us up to Sewanee for the weekend in a shuttle. Almost crashed three times. We still laugh about it now. And she was just there. I invited her to my wedding. She was at my wedding. And so she was just really a present positive figure in my life since then. And Barbara Brink. She's my heart. Ms. Barbara was here all my four years. I believe she retired two years ago or last year. She's not here anymore. She's retired. But as Bakari said that he would go to Professor Roberson's office. I'd go to Miss Barbara's office in the BC and just vent. She was very supportive. She understood. She helped me start tiger girls.

[00:45:59.830] - Asia Baysa

She was a faculty advisor. She was also invited to my life event. And so she's just still present in my life. And I'd always be grateful for Sabra. And her hair was always done. I was just like, Where? And so she would, like, tell us, don't go to her hairstylist. And then nails are always done. She's so perfect. And I was like, we are on the mountain. Yeah, we're all struggling. She's just amazing.

[00:46:29.580] - Bakari Holley

And just to add on to that, professor Roberson was key to me. Ms. Barbara was too. She was key to everybody. Whatever we needed, she was there. She would make sure I would come talk to her sometimes. And sometimes she would be like, you know what? You know what you talk to about this? Let me tell you. Even if it was just, like some mundane social nonsense, go talk to so and so. They'll get you straight on this, because this happened. This happened. This happened. Let me tell you about this. She use to break itdown,

[00:47:06.410] - Asia Baysa

Olivia Pope of Sewanee fix our problems. Fix our problems behind the scenes.

[00:47:10.150] - Bakari Holley

Be supreme.

[00:47:11.920] - Justin Smith

She linked us up with the vans. We had first dibs say, hey, look, extra cash.

[00:47:27.800] - Bakari Holley

She was out here saving souls and saving lives. There was a tribe and a community in this place that none of us would have been able to get anywhere else that we were thinking of going. So without those people, it was hard for me to even just say Professor Roberson, because I'm thinking Woody Register. I'm thinking Barbara Banks. I'm thinking Ms. Jane sitting right there next to Ms. Barbara Banks, helping her out.

[00:47:58.740] - Justin Smith

Mr. B was a connector too.

[00:48:00.470] - Bakari Holley

Listen, he always had to connect. He's like, oh, you trying to get trying to get a party space. My president is trying to get something done, so I need something over here. It's not just like summer school. Nikki Hamilton.

[00:48:25.680] - Justin Smith

Oh, yeah.

[00:48:26.700] - Bakari Holley

Clutch. Much in the clutch, man. Listen, I don't know if she did on purpose. I once had a universal car, right? Getting anywhere, it was crazy. I was like, probably next. She didn't work anymore. On top of that, it was years in the past. Yeah, I didn't do anything terrible because I was a proctor at the time. It was great. I can go visit my friends real quick. Oh, you let you in. It's fine. How did you get in here?

[00:48:56.630] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Don't worry about it.

[00:48:59.780] - Bakari Holley

I tell that story decades. Over a decade. Just a little bit.

[00:49:09.340] - Asia Baysa

Just a little bit.

[00:49:10.810] - Justin Smith

We graduated in ten.

[00:49:12.270] - Bakari Holley

Thank you.

[00:49:13.290] - Asia Baysa

Which is over a decade.

[00:49:14.920] - Justin Smith

Just a little bit.

[00:49:18.300] - Asia Baysa

And a half about it.

[00:49:26.320] - Keenashae Pennicooke

Okay, let's not start.

[00:49:31.520] - Asia Baysa

Like, seven years.

[00:49:38.480] - Keenashae Pennicooke

All right, well, that's it. That's all the questions.

[00:49:42.960] - Asia Baysa  
Interviewer don't you believe when I said.

[00:49:45.220] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
This is my first interview?

[00:49:46.480] - Asia Baysa  
Well, look at you. Multi person interview.

[00:49:50.040] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
Naturally a pro.

[00:49:55.800] - Justin Smith  
Strike the conversation.

[00:49:58.440] - Keenashae Pennicooke  
But thank you so much for this interview.

[00:50:00.660]  
Yeah, of course.