

**CJ:**

Hello, my name is Chelsey Jewett and I'm here interviewing Ray Richardson on July 1 2021 on behalf of the Seymour Library and the Cayuga Museum, and their work with the New York Heritage Project on the Oral History Project. How are you today, Ray?

**RR:**

I'm doing alright.

**CJ:**

So the first question that I would like to ask you is when and where were you born?

**RR:**

So I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in September of 89.

**CJ:**

Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your family? Did you have any siblings?

**RR:**

Yeah, I have two brothers. I'm the youngest. I have two older brothers and an older sister.

**CJ:**

Can you describe your relationship with your siblings a little bit growing up?

**RR:**

I'm the youngest boy, so I mean, pretty much know how that goes. I'm the bottom of the barrel, I guess. My brother's looked after me, but I was definitely you know, I was the smallest. So we kind of, you know, tried to take advantage but they toughened me up, made sure I was tough. My sister was a lot older. But she she was basically our designated babysitter. And when me and my brothers growing up, we had a, we had a pretty close relationship. It was just us and my dad until, you know, well, you know, my mother passed away when I was 10. So after that, it was just really just me, my brothers and my dad.

**CJ:**

Can you just describe your relationship with your father and what it was like growing up with him?

**RR:**

My relationship with my dad, I mean, me and my dad were close. We had a very close knit family. It was really just us. In my childhood, my dad was very militant, very strict. He's big on discipline. Pretty sheltered, growing up, he didn't allow us to really go anywhere, you know, socialize outside of like school and sports. Yeah, like, I mean, he was a regular Dad. We didn't have a whole lot. He's disabled, so he didn't work growing up so we didn't have a whole lot of money, or food or anything like that. But he did ya know do what he could. But the things I remember, well, my dad is, growing up as a child, he was very strict. He didn't let anything slide

the smallest things we could get in trouble for. But he always made sure that we were good. So not really much more to ask for. We didn't have the greatest stuff but he did what he could.

**CJ:**

That's very fair. So did your family have any specific or unique traditions in your household, um, growing up

**RR:**

Unique Traditions? Not really. Not outside the norm on regular holidays. Stuff like that. Like when, when I was young, young, like, you know, five, six years old when I first moved to Auburn. You know, every summer we would go back down to the city to visit family. That's really the only thing I can think of that we look forward to. Just going back and seeing all my friends and family down in Brooklyn. Then once my mom passed away that stopped. So after that, it was really just closed doors: go to school, come home. Once I was old enough to play sports, I go to school, go to practice, come home, do homework, clean house. That's pretty much it.

**CJ:**

Did your family follow any specific religion? And if you did, are you still following that religion?

**RR:**

When I first moved here, from from Brooklyn, we were Muslim. We practice Muslim. And then we converted to Christianity. My mother was a pastor and we were very religious when I was a child. I went to church almost every day and once my mom passed away again, you know, all that stopped. So I don't remember the last time I've been to church. I'm still a religious person. I don't attend church. I do believe in God, and I do consider myself a Christian, but I'm not like heavy on faith and stuff like that. So my dad never like, once my mom passed away, he never made us do any of that stuff. So it kind of just dwindled out.

**CJ:**

Okay what was school like growing up for you?

**RR:**

Yes, so, I was I did very well in school. Growing up I had friends, um, but it wasn't like I didn't have traditional friendships because like I said, like my dad didn't allow us to socialize outside of school. So I only saw my friends at school. And you know, like I said, we didn't have a lot, we have nicest things. So you know, I got picked on a lot for clothes that I wore. I didn't have name brand clothes. I wore a lot of the same clothes every day. I didn't stink or anything like that but it was just like, you know, you can see me in the same shirt or the same pair of pants or something like that every day.

But as far as like actual academics, I was very good at school. I always had good grades. I was always on Honor Roll, the high honor roll. My dad made sure that, you know, me and my brothers took care of school. And then once we were old enough, you know, to play sports, I played basketball for a little bit when I was a kid. That was my favorite sport. And then one year,

I didn't make basketball team, I think like my freshman year of high school, and my brother was running cross country and track and field. And when I didn't make the basketball team, my father made me start running track and field. He said, "You know, you're not going to sit around the house, you're either going to work or you're gonna play sport, but you're not just gonna sit around the house." So they kind of made me run track and then I got very good at it. That's pretty much what I'm known for today.

**CJ:**

Okay, okay. So, during your teenage years, did you hold any jobs?

**RR:**

Did I hold any jobs?

**CJ:**

Yes.

**RR:**

Yeah, I got a job as soon as I could. This is one of my dad's rules, you know, you, anything you want, you got to get out and get it yourself. So you know, once we're old enough to work, I got a job as soon as I could. I think I got my job, my first job, when I was like 14 washing dishes, at a local restaurant here in Auburn. It's called Ricky's, It's now Forks and Spoons (Fork and Spoon), it's an Asian restaurant now, but it used to be Ricky's restaurant, a nice Italian restaurant. I started working there, washing dishes after school after practice. And then, from there, just, I never stopped working. Once I start...I had that job until I was 17. Then I started working with the disabled community. Then I've been there ever since. I've also had other jobs: like I worked at Walmart when I was 18. I worked at Currier Plastics for a while. I did home healthcare work for a while. That's pretty much it.

**CJ:**

Okay, okay. So after high school, did you go to college? Or did you go straight into the work field? And how was that like for you?

**RR:**

Um, right after high school, yeah, I went to Oswego University, Oswego State for a year. And, and then college it really, it didn't go well my first year. I flunked out. And then I was out of school, for a while I was working a few jobs, just maintaining myself. I had my own apartment, stuff like that. And then I decided that I was gonna go back to school to finish my bachelor's. And then I ended up going to Buffalo State where I finished my bachelor's in 2014.

**CJ:**

And what did you get your bachelor's in?

**RR:**

Business Administration. Originally, I went to Oswego in their Accounting program to be an accountant, but that didn't work out. But I still stayed in the business major. So I graduated from Buffalo State with my business administration Bachelor's.

**CJ:**

Okay, and then after college, what were some of the first jobs that you held to now?

**RR:**

I've had the same job, well not the same job. So when I first went to college, I worked in residential care. So I worked in like...and group homes. And I had that job, you know, periodically in and out of college, you know, come home on breaks and stuff like that. Then once I graduated, I was working in Day Hab (Day Habilitation) programs, and then there just went up. I was in a DayHab program and then I was in a Respite program, and then I became a Service Coordinator. And now I'm still the Service Coordinator, but they changed the title. It's Care Manager now.

**CJ:**

Okay. Um, so going back a little bit. You mentioned that you were born in Brooklyn, and you relocated. What was your reasoning for moving to Auburn?

**RR:**

Um, just family issues. My family was going through some things that we just needed to get out of the environment that we were in.

**CJ:**

Very fair. So what would you have to say is your favorite thing about living in Auburn and what would be the least favorite thing about living in Auburn for you?

**RR:**

My favorite thing about living in Auburn, um, it's fairly quiet. It's not as big as The City (New York City) so it's easy to navigate. It's still a nice small city, but you don't have to worry about a lot of the violence and nonsense that goes on down in The City. Well, not too much anymore but back then. My least favorite thing about Auburn is that it may be a bit too small. Everybody knows everybody, everybody's in everybody's business. I don't really like that. Just growing up, like I said, we were very sheltered and everything stayed in-house, so I'm not used to people, you know, knowing my every move and knowing what I'm doing. I don't, I'm not really comfortable with that.

**CJ:**

That's very fair. So if, what is something that you would have to say that Auburn, like, growing up in Auburn, contributed to who you are now?

**RR:**

What about growing up in Auburn contributed to who I am now?

**CJ:**

Yes.

**RR:**

I mean, everything. I pretty much, you know, grew up here for the most part of my life. I don't really know how to answer that.

**CJ:**

No worries. Do you feel like there's anything missing from the kind of histories of Auburn in terms of misrepresentation in minority groups within Auburn? And if there is misrepresentation, do you think there's a better way to improve representation of minority groups within Auburn?

**RR:**

Well, yeah, I feel like you know, growing up here and going to school here, they don't really teach you about the history of here. Auburn does have a rich history in, you know, minorities or what's the term that they use now, I can't recall the term that they use. But yeah, Auburn does have a rich history and they don't necessarily teach you that in schools here, which is very odd to me. They teach you like, you know, when you're in Social Studies class, they teach you this little snippet on William H. Seward or, you know, a little paragraph on Harriet Tubman, but they don't really go into the depths of, you know, what they actually did and what they actually accomplished for the city of Auburn. As far as I know, they don't do the Harriet Tubman home tour anymore, and I don't think I've ever done a tour of the William H. Seward house. So, I mean, they could definitely do more as far as teaching people about Auburn what's here in history.

**CJ:**

That's very fair. So changing up the topic a little bit and going towards more of the Coronavirus pandemic. My first question is, how has the pandemic affected you personally?

**RR:**

It hasn't really affected me. much other than like, socially, you know, the wearing the mask to go into grocery stores and stuff like that. A lot of community events and sporting events and stuff like that we can't do anymore, but as far as me personally in my own life, and everyday life really hasn't affected me at all. Nobody, none of my friends have, you know, gotten...well, I mean, a lot of my friends have gotten it, but they haven't like been deathly ill. I haven't lost anybody to it or anything like that, you know. God forbid.

**CJ:**

Very fair, very fair. So before we wrap up, are there, is there anything that you would like to add to this interview that you would like anybody viewing this video to see or hear?

**RR:**

Nothing that I can think of.

**CJ:**

Okay, well, thank you very much for sitting down and interviewing with me. I enjoyed talking with you.

**RR:**

Thank you!