

Shantar Gibson interviewed by Setare Arashloo and Barrie Cline

Setare Arashloo: As they explained, these are the base question that we ask from other colleagues and other electricians in the trade. Feel free to add onto something that you may feel is not part of the question necessarily, or just comes to mind. Some of them are just, share a story [00:00:30] if you feel like it, things like that. It's not, I'll ask a question, you answer particularly, because ... Go on with whatever you feel like expressing.

Shantar: Okay.

Setare Arashloo: Please tell me your name and your job title, and where you live.

Shantar: My name's Shantar Gibson. I'm a local 3AJ electrician, and I currently reside in Orange, New Jersey.

Setare Arashloo: [00:01:00] Good. Did you have another profession prior to this? Tell us a little bit about your background. How did you become an electrician?

Shantar: Yes, I had various entities before this. Right before I got into the local, I was a manager at an arts store, but my career before this was graphic design. I went to Pratt for communication design. I got an accredited degree from them. [00:01:30] Went into the industry, worked for a while. The industry started to become more freelance, and I could see the writing on the wall. Just to protect myself, I started looking in other places.

Setare Arashloo: Good, and that's how you started at the local?

Shantar: No, getting into the local, I started with ... I was just kicking around actually. I'm an artist, all day long, and that always overrides whatever's going on. I try to fit it in [00:02:00] on my path. Went and worked in arts store, just to have a little bit of money coming in, but I could really focus on what I was doing. I met a lot of great people there. I wined up getting laid off from there for some weird paperwork error, and just being a brown person, the fact that the paperwork error had money attached to it, I felt very uncomfortable with it. I decided that I would never do another job that had money involved, because of [00:02:30] the stereotypes and just the way it always in my opinion goes down.

I was like, "this is it for me, I need somewhere where my integrity will always be held up." I was wandering around again, many of my entities. I learned how to tattoo along the way. I was always tattooing and I helped my friend open a shop in Brooklyn. It was called, Tough Girl Tattoos. I helped run that for a year. While I was doing that, one day I was riding my bike in the city just hanging out with a friend, and [00:03:00] we saw a

construction site, and we just were scoffing at it. It was like, "How did they get those jobs? I'm so annoyed. That flag waver must be making gazillions of dollars. I want that."

While we were on the bike ride, my friend disappeared and came back and was like, "Oh I just talked to this lady from [Carnett 00:03:16] and she said she went through this program." Then that kicked back to two years before, when I was still in school, I saw a bus station that had this picture on it with a lady hanging off the side of a building. I was [00:03:30] like, "Man, that looks cool." I took a picture of it at the time, stored it, but I was like, "Yeah, I'm going to go hang off the side of buildings." It was already stored in my psyche.

On that bike ride, her talking about it, I went home that night and called the next day. It moved so fast. They were like, "Come in on Wednesday," blah blah blah. Took the entrance exam and then next thing you know I was in N.E.W, on my way to the trades. I didn't know ... I knew it was electrical. I came in there wanting to do that, but [00:04:00] once we were doing the math and everything I was like, "Ooo, I don't know if ..." I've spent a lot of life right brained, I don't know if I'm ready to transition to left brain. I didn't give it enough attention growing up.

Once we completed the program, they were like, "You're totally set. You're made for electrical. That should be [inaudible 00:04:20], or response for you to go into that." That was it. Took the test, and the rest is history.

Setare Arashloo: Did you have any family members or people [00:04:30] you know who were in the trade or any kind of-

Shantar: No, not at all. Sight unseen.

Setare Arashloo: Cool. Do you remember the first day of your job?

Shantar: Yes. I woke up, and I set out really early, like 5:30 in the morning to get to work on time. It was in midtown, and it was on Park Avenue. It was very intimidating. I had this address which was 110 Park Avenue. I was there early, standing there. I don't even [00:05:00] really drink coffee, but I was like, "I'm going to get me a cup of coffee. I'm just going to jump right into this role." While I'm waiting I'm like, "Oh," I call my foreman and I'm like, "Yeah, how you get into the building? Nobody knows where you guys are, who you are." He goes, "Well where are you?" I'm like, "110 Park Avenue." He's like, "Oh no, we're at 101 Park Avenue." Switched the numbers.

I went from being early and on time, to late. I was like, "Ugh." Walking in, the first [00:05:30] job I was on was Aetna, the insurance company. I walk in, it's this massive room, this weird lights hanging, there's drilling, and people are flying passed you with sheet rock, duct work. I was just, my knees were literally shaking. I don't scare easily, but I have to admit that I was humbled. I wouldn't say intimidated, but I was definitely humbled. I was like, "I am open to learning. I don't want to get hurt. This looks crazy. [00:06:00] I'm excited about this." I met my foreman, he joked around, I didn't get the jokes right away. That was the first day, that I remember, being late.

Setare Arashloo: Do you remember one of the jokes?

Shantar: Huh?

Setare Arashloo: Do you remember any of the jokes?

Shantar: Oh, yeah actually. I say it to people now. He was like, "Oh, what are you? A TA1? I could smell the similac on your breath," you know like you're a brand new baby. He's like, "Oh I could smell the similac. Oh we got a new fish," like when you go to jail. It's [00:06:30] like, "Don't bring attention to me." Yeah, that was the first day.

Setare Arashloo: Cool.

Shantar: My first foreman was Pat [Morithio 00:06:37]. Still remember him. He's a good guy.

Setare Arashloo: Have you ever passed on any tools to a colleague or have you had any tools passed onto you?

Shantar: Well yes, in the backwards order. I had tools passed onto me, and then I went onto to emulate the things that I saw. I think my [00:07:00] character naturally has, which I wasn't aware of, leadership qualities, organizing qualities, and the ability to adapt to new situations. It wasn't often tested as an artist, because you just you see the uniform of artists and you immediately feel comfortable. Ear lobe piercings, mohawks, died hair, you're like, "Okay you're not a threat," but khaki shirts, button downs, you don't know where this is going to go. If you're going to just [00:07:30] pummel me with left [this 00:07:31] ideals all day, while I don't care what you think.

I thought I was going to be at arms in this world. Whereas, once I started to meet people and just see their work ethic, it didn't really matter what came out of their mouth because I was like, "You're a good person, because you do the right thing with your time and space." Now where you're getting your information from, a lot of people need to do a lot more research. I'm not [00:08:00] going to fault you for that. You're human. That learning process, how to get along with people that I previously would've assumed that I wouldn't have anything in common with, that was a huge gift. Once you start getting along with different people, you start to move into a role of comfort and then by default, leadership and artistry will come out, because you start to feel like yourself. You don't have to layer yourself with defenses. You can just start to loosen your belt a little bit and be like, "Well I actually [00:08:30] would like to chime in on this conversation. I have an opinion." Again, after you learn the lay of the land.

Other people who actually taught me something, it was the way that they interacted with me. They made me feel comfortable, the way that they took the time to break down information. They were constantly telling me, "You're going to be this in the future." I was just like, "I don't understand what you're seeing, because who doesn't work this hard?" I'm coming from having three jobs. I didn't know that there [00:09:00] was a world that existed where people had a high paying job from 18 years old, and never knew any ills of where's the rent money going to come from, and so on and so

forth. They've just been on easy street. They don't know what it's like to be a janitor or a waiter, or anything else in the world. I was coming in with that perspective and background, and to see that there were still people who are humble and willing to share their knowledge, and not cover up what they had.

Me being [00:09:30] brown, woman, gay, I have a lot of things going. It's not like any of those are hide able in my situation. I learned a lot just coming in with my defenses and how people were able to put me at ease. Through me feeling at ease, it made me feel more comfortable to step out of my role of just working, and see where else I could expand my branches. They put us in college, which I didn't even know it came [00:10:00] with it. That was a bonus. Once we started going to college, it was okay, these are labor classes. I had no clue about the labor movement whatsoever. Once I started to hear about that, I again, started to paint without them even knowing because I've always been searching for this ultimate topic that could be universal and never pin holed me like, "Oh I pick cubism and now I'm stuck there. If I want to do figures, I can't go anywhere else."

I was like, "Labor, wait a second." [00:10:30] This affects everyone. It's never going to go away. It's a positive. It's a negative. I was like, "Okay." Then receiving all the information in some of the classes we had here, arts and labor. The books that we were reading, I think it was literature and labor, they were actually fun classes here. It wasn't all just civil rights, labor using, women's rights, [ash 00:10:53], everything in a row. It was seamless and it started to feel like the schooling and the life [00:11:00] that I had before. I was like, "This is great. Everything's just melding together." Once, took the art class here, we jumped out off of projects that we had in class and it sprung outside the door.

That's when I saw, I had that aha moment. I was like, "Uh oh, this is a bridge to something. I didn't leave anything behind." It's actually, you just never know where you're going to wind up in life, but I was like, "Holy cow, I'm on the right path. I was supposed to go this way. How did I know?" I stumbled [00:11:30] in it, and you always think you could see it coming, you'll have all these plans. I still wound up where I was supposed to be without even trying. It was almost after I'd given up. I'm just like, "Ah, I just need money right now. I can't even." The art coming out of it, and the n just through the art and teaching on the job, being taught on the job. Then I started to go back and volunteer at the trade school that I came from, which was NEW, Non-traditional Employment for Women.

Whenever I would speak to [00:12:00] them, they called them trade speakers, you come back and speak to new classes who are coming in. Whenever I would go back, they'd pull me to the side and be like, "That was a really dynamic conversation." I was like, "Well, if I'm talking about something that I care about, and I can't see the ..." Because I'm actually a really shy person, you'd be surprised, but when certain topics and things inspire me, I can tuck my shy person away and I'm just snap into another character and be, there's more to be had than to worry a bout [00:12:30] being shy. Your knees knocking? Get over it. Through talking to the women and them saying, "You're really dropping some pearls of wisdom. There's no really way to categorize what you're doing, but we'd like you to come back more often."

Then, that transitioned for more trade speaking, to getting a position there teaching an electrical class. They're like, "While you're teaching electrical if you could go ahead and slide in some of those pearls of wisdom, so that ..." Not that they're trying to create cookie cutter people, but so that they can [00:13:00] have a success rate with people really understanding what they're getting into, and bringing what I learned in college into that place, the labor studies, and all of that together. With that whole long story, following forward, out of nowhere, I came in as an apprentice. I was tired. I had to learn from scratch. I had no clue what I was doing. At first, I was complete raw clay to, now I understand what I'm doing. [00:13:30] I'm very rarely, unlike the majority of women that I've come across, not that they're doing anything wrong, but I've never been laid off or put into any of the stereotypical roles that I've heard of.

Because everybody's like, "You're doing something phenomenal." To me it's like, "But I'm doing what you guys are doing. You just don't give the guys credit for it. You're just making it extra special because it's a girl doing it." My end goal is just be like, "I just want to be known as a good mechanic, not the good girl mechanic." I've achieved that. [00:14:00] Finishing school here, I've achieved that. Going back to volunteer, all these achievements change your perspective and I didn't know that. That's the end of it I guess.

Barrie Cline: Would you maybe walk us through a typical day on the job that you're at now, so we could get a good picture of what every day work, or extraordinary work is like?

Shantar: Okay. I'm right now, at the NYU [Lancome 00:14:26] Center on 34th and 1st Avenue. We're doing [00:14:30] the Kimmel building. There's a science building, and two new additions, but I'm in the Kimmel building. They have these strange turnstiles that you have to scan in, in the morning. Then you have to go through this obstacle course of rocks and pipes, and I personally enjoy it because I like the outdoors. I'm just like, "Ooo, this is really menacing. Be careful. Anything could happen at anytime," but I enjoy the entry way. I get there really early before the sun's up. I just like the walk [00:15:00] from Penn station, nice and quiet.

Once I'm on the job, we go, we meet in a shanty. All the early birds, I didn't used to be the early bird, but I just again added something new to my personality. Now that I'm one of the early birds, there's a whole level of conversation that happens before all the people who trail in about 15 minutes before. You really get to know some of the people that you don't get to work with all day, which is kind of cool. I started doing the crossword puzzle, which I'm very excited about. That's one of my new [00:15:30] routines. I didn't even know I'd like something like that, but now I'm a crossword fiend.

We go outside. They started this new program, which is called, stretch and flex. We actually get an extra half hour in the morning for aerobics and stretching. Everybody gripes and groans, but not for nothing. I take advantage of it, because we're working really hard and I'm like, "My bones hurt. Everything's tight." Just by doing stretch and flex, each person had a flex that I [00:16:00] didn't know. I was like, "This hurts," and they're like, "Do this one." Now out of nowhere, he's like, "Okay, Shantar's leading us now in stretch and flex, because she knows all the techniques." Everybody who was griping and groaning, they don't say anything, but they stand there. The group went

from two people doing it and 20 people standing looking at you, to everyone's actually doing it to the best of their capacity, because we just quietly kept doing it. It was like, "No, this actually is really helping," so that happens.

Then I'm the 5th floor, so I walk up the stairs. There's no elevator. [00:16:30] Once I get to the 5th floor, I have a female shanty, of which has been invaded by some of my male counterparts. It's the shanty now, and we have to do this whole routine of switching from street clothes to high vis clothes, putting on a harness, getting the controller for the lift. This is a no ladder job, so we're on drivable lifts. I gather my whole day, go set up in my section, and [00:17:00] then I have some tunes very low in my phone. I put my one earphone in, so that I could still hear what's going on, but I can groove to some really good music. I start my day.

Right now, I'm working on conduit, which I'm very excited about because females don't get to work on it that often. This foreman didn't give me the whole speech of, "Can you run conduit?," all the doubt. He was just like, "You're on this." Inside, I was just really excited like a kid in a candy store. I was like, [00:17:30] "Yeah, I'm going to hit it. Finally, my day in the sun." After nine years, when you think it can't get anymore exciting, now I'm really excited. People come over, they try to distract me and talk by my lift, and I'm like, "Sshh, would you be quiet? I'm having fun here and you're distracting me from what I feel like doing today."

Very excited about my conduit run. It looks gorgeous. You know what I mean? People coming by, they're looking at it. There's no, "Oofs," or nasty reactions. There's more like, "Hey, when you're done there, come finish mines." [00:18:00] I'm like, "That means it's going well." I'm envisioning the whole thing, and it's working out. Then we go through all the many breaks that we have, and we wrap the day up. Then at the end of the day, I get into shenanigans. Interviews, art, hanging out with my dog, stuff like that.

Setare Arashloo: Can you explain a little bit, what is the conduit run?

Shantar: Yeah conduit is electric ... They're going to get mad if I mess this up. [00:18:30] I believe it's electric metallic tubing. It's three quarter conduit. A recent project we worked on, we used that conduit to build the bench and to bring it 3D off of the wall. When you have a run, they give you a set of prints, and they just show you point A and point B. This is where you're freelance worker/freelance artist, and they go, "Get there how you get there. I can't instruct you on how to do it, but don't do it ugly. [00:19:00] Don't do it aggressively," meaning don't shoot across the ceiling and just cut off the space so that no one else can follow you. Look what's there, join the party, and just blend into the flow of what's already in the ceiling, while also supporting it and making sure that it's sound and neat.

You have to make your own supports, a length of conduit is 120 inches, 10 feet. One [00:19:30] person with an arm span of six feet, has to maneuver a tenth of pipe. It gets interesting to be in one place and the other, and you have to come up with different ways to support it while you run from here to there, so that it doesn't fall down. Even that part of it is probably the most fascinating. How can you be two people at once? That's my favorite part of it.

Setare Arashloo: Cool.

Barrie Cline: What are some of the other skills that are [00:20:00] necessary? That's an interesting skill, what other skills that maybe you didn't expect you would need to have or what are some of the skills that really stand out for you in terms of-

Shantar: Driving the lift. I don't drive at all. I'm only a bicycle person. They just throw you in this lift. They assume you can drive it. Already I was just like, "I don't do car ... I failed my driving test three times." I was like, "Aahh." When I took off, it was one mile an hour, my turns were really wide. They're like, "What are you [00:20:30] doing? You all right in that lift?" No one ever jumps in and says, "Give me that," or corrects you. They just let you find your way with it. Now, I believe I can drive a car. Sight unseen. If you put me in a car, I think I can handle parallel parking now, because I can whip this thing in tight spots. They're like, "Wow you're a really good driver." I'm like, "See, you'd never know that I don't drive at all in real life." That's a great skill.

Again, people skills really count. They have a saying, "There are professional ball [00:21:00] busters," is what they call them. I don't happen to be one of those. I work well with others, the other trades. I usually speak to everybody, so whenever we need something I, by accident, become the ambassador because no one else is talking to the other trades. "Can you ask them for this? I saw you talking to them the other day." I'm like, "They're standing right there. Less than a foot away. You could say something. They can hear you." That's a great skill.

I [00:21:30] think I like that it keeps me fit. I really didn't take shape or working out at all important, but now I eat differently. I workout differently to make sure that I don't get injured on the job, so that's been a bonus for me.

Setare Arashloo: Cool.

Shantar: Today, I got to spray paint boxes, so I was like, "Yeah!" There's a little art always in there, and being organized. You can come by, you can find all my material, [00:22:00] it's not a scene that looks like a catastrophe where your tools are on the floor. I watch some people work, and they're just reaching all day. They're spinning in their own tasmanian world, and it's just like, "There's no reason for that. Just stop. Place your things, and you don't have to walk around frantically, 'Where did I leave this?'" That's not my thing. I think being organized is a skill as well.

Barrie Cline: Could you say a bit about what it means to you to be a union member?

Shantar: [00:22:30] Yes. I personally am more of a loner, as a personality trait, but I do love joining causes and groups that are productive in doing things. Just from being an apprentice, I haven't seen it so much as a journeyman because I've been busy, but as an apprentice just throwing the Christmas parties, the food drives, a lot of the community work that they do, I felt more ease to participate because it wasn't going [00:23:00] in sight unseen, I don't know where to start. It was, we have this all in a big package and whether it's you wanting to help kids, you want to help with cancer, you want to help

with an AIDS walk, you want to workout and lose weight together, you want to volunteer with habitat for humanity, you want to help with Sandy. There's all these different outlets.

If you want to look into them, you can. They even have an art fair, which they invite people to bring not just [00:23:30] trades art, but just art in general that they participate with. That umbrella of just possibility, I like that it's a one stop shop. I feel already comfortable because we all have something in common. Again, it breaks down those barriers of being uncomfortable with new things and people.

Setare Arashloo: I know you mentioned this, but maybe more specifically, what parts of your job feels most creative to you? If there [00:24:00] are.

Shantar: From soup to nuts, the entire experience is creative whether you're pulling wire, it takes on this form as it moves through the ceiling, which is very seamless. I don't know if you remember the Matrix, but a lot of the devices in there that they use for those props are actually electrical tools. I always thought it was cool when I saw the movie, but then when I saw it in real life I was like, "Hey, those are the arms from the monsters in [00:24:30] the Matrix." You start hoarding material little by little with all these possibilities.

They were throwing out exit signs and I saw these little LED lights and that they just snapped together, and they had a small battery backup. I was like, "Oh man, I'm going to make illuminated canvases, and paint on clear things and put lights behind them. Then when you turn on the light, that's the only way to see it. Make it a switch art instead of just a room light that comes on. I immediately just started making connections to what I was already [00:25:00] doing in life. Those things are some of the most important things.

Even a panel, how they all come in in the colors, the seamlessly just stack down. The tediousness of just sitting there and screwing something in over and over again, and preparing it, it feels exactly like when I'm painting because you need that same stillness. You sit, you Setare at the canvas, it's quiet, you take a dap, you walk away. [00:25:30] You look close, you stand back, and it's all of the same behavior as when I was painting as when I'm at work. It happens for every single task, except for coffees and delivery. Again, those are drab things that come along with the job, but every other thing is just about fascinating still to me. I'm not bored yet.

Barrie Cline: What are your aspirations as an electrician?

Shantar: I feel like I'm doing it already. I just really wanted to be good at it. I wanted it to be second [00:26:00] nature. I wanted to approach it the way that I know I'm going to wake up tomorrow, and that I have to go to sleep, and then I'm going to eat food. I wanted it to be part of my organic life. It has become that.

Setare Arashloo: Have you ever feel scared at the job or intimidated with a task that you were given or an accident that you thought may happen?

Shantar: You mean safety wise?

Setare Arashloo: [00:26:30] Safety mostly.

Shantar: No, I've never felt unsafe at all. That again, comes from my outdoorsy background. I always climb into that extra limb in the tree that you maybe should fear. I jump out of things. I have no problem. This was adding to that part of me. To me, I'm just a kid outside, playing in the dirt and I get paid for it. I was doing that already when I was little, going places that I shouldn't. I was attracted to old warehouses, [00:27:00] and "Oh that windows broken. I bet you something's cool in there. We could make it our own haunted house." It adds to your imagination, but instead I feel like this is the Charlie Brown factory. I don't know if you remember Charlie Brown and the Christmas tree, but that little part when they all run in and they beautify things. I feel like that's what we do. We Charlie Brown stuff.

We come in, the building's dank, old, useless, and by the time we're done it's a marvel of what stands there afterwards. I don't even think half [00:27:30] of the guests or customers that inhabit the place after where they realize it, and just a personal spiritual thing. I believe you leave your energy places. I've gone to, I worked in a camp, and I went there when it was closed years later, and I stood on the black top, and I could still hear the kids, their laughter. Almost as if the energy was stored there. I believe that even if we don't get the necessary respect on the surface for building these [00:28:00] places, all the laughter, the conversations, the arguments, we leave it in there in the air. Spiritually, I feel like it's a nice connection for how many places you can be. I feel well traveled because of this job, for sure.

Speaker 3: If there was something that you could change about the work, what would it be, or the work on the job site, or the culture of work?

Shantar: I really would have more organization in the trades talk [00:28:30] better. I think that we've seen a thousand ... I'm only in nine years and I'm like, "There's a rhyme and there's a reason for this." If you put this in first, and then this, and then this, and then this, then this'll work. Instead, it's just, "Blah, everybody go at once." It's constantly what's causing the problem, in my opinion. They've tried to map this out ahead of time architects, and give out 3D drawings, but they still not scheduling us time wise [00:29:00] on the job, and they're not giving us enough space to create properly.

Every time we do it faster and faster, they just keep speeding up the wheel. Instead they be like, "That was a special case, we did that," but we shouldn't always have to work that fast or else you're physically beating us up too fast. That's my opinion.

Setare Arashloo: Do you feel you're getting paid enough for your job?

Shantar: Not considering the scope of how much is being made for the job that we're performing, no. Not at all.

Barrie Cline: [00:29:30] Why are some of the ... What are some of the reasons behind that, that you think you should-

Shantar: I feel like we're partnered almost, not 50%, but I feel like we're 30%/70%, at the very least in production because we're in the field. Any architect can sit in a room and draw up anything, but they cannot physically go into the field and manifest it. That part of being [00:30:00] an artisan is we add up to one artisan, but you get the good clean air in an office all the time, and you get six figures times two, no questions asked. Ours, questionable, whether you'll make enough to support yourself this year. Again, they flood it with a lot of people just in case. When there's a lot of work, they hire a lot of people.

Then when the work slows down, there's still a lot of people. That's where the issue comes in, but [00:30:30] how it's being distributed as we go along, I feel is ... A safety individual I'm sure makes more. If you think about time and labor, makes more than us, only because they're walking around just like, "Hey, while you're creating, make sure you have this, this, and this on." I'm not against safety, I'm totally for it, I'm just saying all the layers of what they find important it's like, "Let's protect our insurance." Not necessarily [00:31:00] thoroughly concerned about your safety. It comes through the seams. I don't want to step on anyone's toes, but I do see politics.

Maybe shares in these companies, I don't know. That way, if you're invested, you might treat something that you own differently. Maybe we start Turner. Why do we need to use [00:31:30] Turner to build? If you take collectively what all of these unions, their annuities and stuff like that is worth, you're looking at hundreds of millions. You could start your own thing. Start to build your own thing. I don't know how that works, but I'm just saying-

Barrie Cline: [crosstalk 00:31:44] company. Something else.

Shantar: Yeah, I'm just saying that waiting for a larger juggernaut to come in and to break off pieces to you, is one way. We're living in the age of empowerment, where people don't wait. They start music careers on the internet. [00:32:00] They start writing careers on the internet. They start movie careers on the internet. They start art projects and careers on the internet. You don't need as much top down, trickle down money in order to be wealthy or succeed. How we get into that new paradigm, I'm not sure, but I'm sure having the youth and training us and giving us exposure to newer information, something's going to bud from it somehow. Even if it's stuff that happens outside of work.

Setare Arashloo: [00:32:30] What do you think about furlough?

Shantar: I personally think it's a great idea, but I know others don't. I'll just stick to my own opinion, because others aren't here. I think that it's a great idea because it shows a concern for your fellow brother like, "Oh they hired too many people." Who cares? I have a job. Who cares what happens to you? Furlough is actually the act of saying, every one of us should ... I'm willing to sacrifice six figures, and [00:33:00] let's all make \$60k

or \$50k a year, which is more than reasonable if you're coming from humble means, which the majority of people are.

It's nice if you make six figures or something like that, but it's not necessary. I don't want to see any one of my brothers or sisters not being able to feed their family when they took the time to go through all of the training, get into the local. They did everything that I did, and they deserve to be able to come home with their head held high and take care of [00:33:30] their family and well being. Furlough, that's what it represents. If three people were constantly for a company, they go out and it allows one person to work for six months. Which in six months, they can make more than enough to support their family.

I get to go have a life. Eight weeks off, really? You're never going to find that kind of deal just about anywhere in life. If you're good with [00:34:00] your finances, you can save your money, you should be able to travel the world and just spend time with your family. Walk your dog, whatever we're not doing when we're constantly working from 9:00 to 5:00, Monday through Friday. That's why I think it's a great thing.

Setare Arashloo: Do you think you will tell your son or daughter, or anyone from your next generation who may consult with you, to [00:34:30] become an electrician?

Shantar: Again, if I saw their aptitude and that's what they really wanted to do, all I hope that I'm representing is thinking outside of the box when you choose career paths. Whether they decide that they could do electrical, astronaut, engineer, I really want at least the females in my family to know, don't be intimidated by mechanical things or mathematical things, or even something that looks like it requires a lot of strength or large build to accomplish. [00:35:00] You literally can do anything that you set your mind to.

The males in my family, male privilege already exists to a certain degree. Again, I would encourage them to do and follow their heart, but if they wanted to be a ballet dancer, I would also think that that was courageous. I just wanted to represent pursuing things outside of the box. If anybody in my family really showed that kind of interest, and I saw an astuteness [00:35:30] or when I have family members help me with projects around the house and I see a real excitement, I totally would let my whole family do this. No questions asked. I don't think it's that scary.

Setare Arashloo: Do you ever, or usually customize your tools or tool belt, or some sort of tools or materials that you work with on a daily basis?

Shantar: Yes. I look, a lot of the stuff that I started [00:36:00] to build my stuff off of is the army, because they're constantly in combat carrying heavy things, and need to be able to retrieve things in a quick manner. A lot of the hunky tools that just have the name brands of what the trades use, I found them to not actually work for what we're doing in the field. I went out and got an army utility belt, and separate all of my tools so that it's more on a quick draw. It's been better for my back and the way I carry the tools.

I'm always prepared. I don't need [00:36:30] a cart or dropping things when I'm at a high altitude or something like that, because I have it all set up on me kind of like Inspector Gadget. I took stuff from other elements of life where I see people succeeding with carrying things on them at all times, and I applied it there. As opposed to what naturally everyone else is doing.

Setare Arashloo: Cool. Let me ... I think we covered about everything. [00:37:00] I still want to get the address of the tattoo shop.

Shantar: Oh it's closed.

Setare Arashloo: Oh no.

Shantar: It's closed, because yeah ... I still tattoo. I just, we separated because her ego took off. I didn't foresee that. She didn't stay humble. She tried to make me her employee and I was like, "I taught you how to tattoo. How am I your employee?" Her parents came from money, so that's how we opened [00:37:30] the shop, but she didn't know how to run a shop or be in one. I had to be there and while she worked, she was a graphic designer also, she was my doppelganger, she stayed working I would be at the shop all day. Then she would take over nights and weekends. It was seamless like that, but then she just wanted to hang out and say she had a tattoo shop, and just me sit there and give her half. I just was like, "I'm out of here. This is silly."

Right now, I'm building a studio in my home. I have an extra [00:38:00] big room, but I don't want it to just be for tattoos anymore. I want it to be for ... I want to paint in there. I want to create movies, music, everything that I've always been pursuing now that I have the so-called extra cash laying around, I have the ability to build my dream studio and ultimately keep moving until I have a space where when artists bring up that they want to work on something, I'll be like, "I have a space for this." Being an artist, and you're starting out, you don't [00:38:30] have money. You need a sponsor, and-

Setare Arashloo: Even half way through, you may not.

Shantar: Half way through, and still at the end, but I like the idea of when I meet young people and they have all these skills, I want to have a place to be like, "Hey, I record. Oh you want to do a podcast? I already have a green screen set up in the room. Oh you want to go on the radio, I have all of the audio equipment sitting here." Because I've made a lot of makeshift studios over the years, I know how to put one together [00:39:00] without spending an arm and a leg. Then I hope to, the union was always meant to be my investor, like a bank. They're investing in me, but I'm not only supposed to stay stagnant and just go to work and come home. It's to get back to what I was doing before, but I just didn't have the money or means to do so.

When these all culminate together, hopefully at a good age, when I'm older I don't have to do it till my bones are falling apart like [00:39:30] everybody else. I can go off into the sunset and continue to pursue what I was already doing before, but now in an older matured ... My time passed, I'm almost 40 now, so I'm ready to pass the baton to the

next, young, fresh, enthusiastic person. I'm not greedy and want to be the cool person all the way until I'm 70. No, it's someone else's turn, but you want to mentor that energy instead of little, talking down to it. Because I felt like a lot [00:40:00] of older artists didn't embrace younger artists when I was in awe of their work. They just scoff at it and brush you off, instead of taking you under their wing.

They're so afraid of you being their peer that they don't really mentor you or nurture you to get you to a good space, or help you meet the people. They don't need you to steal their zone or their little world. I don't want to be that sort of artist. I want to be open, worldly, and make sure that everybody has [00:40:30] a shot at whatever this dream is.

Setare Arashloo: Cool.

Shantar: Yeah, so the tattoos are still there, it's just I'm building the studio. Every now and again, my old clients that I've been doing their whole body, I'll set up for them and I'll keep going. I have an album if you ever want to see some of this stuff.

Setare Arashloo: Nice.

Shantar: I've met some cool people over the years. I only take pictures of the weird ones though. The generic ones, I'm like, "Ugh, another name." They get boring after a while. [00:41:00] Everybody thinks their idea's great, but to me, it's yeah I've done this before. You can only do so many stars and hearts, and this and that, but it's not boring it's amazing to you. I just love that look on people's face when it's done and it's art, and you walk away with it. It's the greatest canvas I've ever found. Yeah.

Setare Arashloo: Awesome. Great.

Shantar: Yay.

Setare Arashloo: Thank-

How did we do?



If you rate this transcript 3 or below, this agent will not work on your future orders