

## **Background**

**Name of person interviewed:** Chayla Avery [CA]

### **Facts about this person:**

Age: 23 (1999)

Sex: Female

Occupation: Nurse

Credentials: BAN, GN

Residence: North Bethesda, Maryland

Ethnic background: African American

**Interviewer:** Carmen Hewitt [CH]

**Transcriber:** Sara Cohen [SC]

**Interview location:**

**Date of interview:**

## **KEY WORDS**

nurse, pre-med, advocate, nurse practitioner, Howard University, COVID-19, pandemic, Chi Eta Phi, mentorship, NCLEX, RN, BSN, scholarship, clinicals, ICU, NICU, extern, internship, bridge program, HBCU, Chi Eta Phi Sorority Incorporated, Beta, African American, discrimination, bias, racism, community, novice, resources, professionalism, sisterhood, maternal and child health, service for humanity, work-life balance, self-care, imposter syndrome, nurse leader

## **Abstract**

In this interview, Chayla shares her inspiration for becoming a nurse and details her educational journey. She goes into depth on her experience having to work and go to school at the same time. Chayla emphasizes the positive impact of her membership in Chi Eta Phi and her unwavering commitment to supporting the organization at all levels. She closes by discussing her social life and the importance of work-life balance and self-care.

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**CH**

Good afternoon, or evening now, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this historical project, the Archie Green Folklife Project Occupations. This is a historical moment and I thank you for being part of history. Will you please state your complete name and year of birth?

**CA**

Chayla Avery, 1999.

**CH**

Where were you born?

**CA**

I was born in Detroit, Michigan.

**CH**

Where do you currently reside?

**CA**

I currently reside in North Bethesda, Maryland.

**CH**

Who or what inspired you to become a nurse?

**CA**

So, my great grandmother actually was a nurse at the hospital that I was born at, and I think at first I was kind of doing the pre-med route. I was thinking of going to become an OB-GYN, but I wanted to get a little more patient experience and, just, hands-on bedside care. As opposed to doing the biology route, I chose to go this way, and I think that the more experience I've gotten in nursing, the more I just fell in love with the passion for being that advocate for the patient. So, I think I'm stuck here [chuckles].

**CH**

No more desire to pursue becoming a physician?

**CA**

I think I may do the nurse practitioner route, but I like the holistic care that I've seen nurses do.

**CH**

Tell me about your family and how it was growing up.

**CA**

So, growing up, I was the only child for a long time, about nine years, and then I became the oldest, over time, of four. So, just almost like a parental figure for my little siblings, which was a good experience. But I was born, like I said, in Detroit but raised out in the suburbs. I think my parents, having come from that background, kind of wanted me to have a different experience, as far as just some of the violence and the crime that we see in the inner city. So, I was actually raised out in suburban Michigan.

**CH**

Anything else about your childhood you want to share?

**CA**

Yeah. I feel like my parents were very loving growing up. I have a very big family, people from all over. Most people from the Midwest have roots in the south, so I have family in Kentucky, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, almost everywhere, so some of those southern traditions were still very prevalent in my household and my upbringing. School always came kind of very easy to me. Education was heavily pushed by my mother who has several degrees, so, that was one of the things that inspired me to come out to Howard University to get a great education.

**CH**

Continue to tell us about your nurse education.

**CA**

So, my nurse education at Howard took me five years as opposed to the traditional four, just based on the timing of when I was in school. I've had to endure things such as the COVID-19 pandemic and trying to transition from physical learning in the classroom to a virtual platform, which was a little bit difficult. So, I think when that happened was when things kind of got rocky, but with the support of my family and my nursing organization, Chi Eta Phi, financially, as far as mentorship, I was able to push through and I actually graduated this past weekend.

**CH**

Yay! [clapping] Congratulations! So, how does that feel?

**CA**

It feels almost surreal. I don't think that it'll really set in until I'm out working with patients on my own. Just because I have the NCLEX coming up, I feel like there's still a little bit more work to do over the summer, so just preparing for that.

**CH**

And the NCLEX is the Nursing Certification Board--

**CA**

Yes.

**CH**

Exam?

**CA**

Yes, the big test that we have to get in order to get the RN behind our BSN.

**CH**

To get that license. Tell me a little bit more about your educational path. What challenges did you face? What was difficult for you and what was exciting for you?

**CA 04:30**

So, I would say as far as challenges, just being so far away from home. I'm very grateful to have had mentors and big sisters and things in my sorority because Michigan is about 500, almost 600 miles away from Washington, D.C. and I came here not really knowing anybody. I had one family member who lives here but she was also in school in Maryland, so it was really kind of me on my own. I think just missing my family was a challenge. I'll say also, the fact that Howard is a private institution therefore very expensive. I fought for a scholarship but it didn't cover everything, so since freshman year, I've been working to kind of put myself through school, not really wanting to rely too heavily on my parents who were also raising, you know, other children at the time. So, just trying to balance school with work with organizations as well as, obviously, a rigorous nursing course load, proved to be challenging at times. Then, as I stated before, just the COVID-19 pandemic. I think there were a lot of things in life that I haven't had to deal with, such as anxiety, just the overwhelming fear that I think everyone was experiencing at that time when it first hit and being away from home. There were family members getting sick and I was away at school and I felt like there was nothing I can do, you know. Traveling at that time was almost unheard of. Everyone was really afraid to do that, so I kind of felt stuck. Then, as I said, already just doing the virtual courses, it was kind of hard to put certain pieces together because, you know, you have the textbook knowledge and then when you go into clinicals, it's almost reinforced. So, that was taken away from us.

**CH**

For the clinical portion during COVID, you had to use simulators online? Is that how the clinical was done?

**CA**

So, when the pandemic very first started, we didn't have clinical at all. We were actually given an incomplete for whatever class we still had clinical in. So, I know from my school, we were doing maternity and med surg at the same time. I was able to complete my maternity rotation, but when COVID hit, I was going into med surg. So, they gave us an incomplete for the class and they told us after the summer, we would see what things were looking like. In that case, when we came back that fall, I actually went into the ICU because that was all that was available. So, I personally never actually got a med surg experience.

**CH**

So, what else did you all do?

**CA**

We did some virtual, like, simulations. We did simulations in the lab, a lot of case studies, a lot of software such as SimChart, different things like that, to kind of supplement the little bit of in-person clinicals that we did have.

**CH**

And how was that?

**CA**

It was good. I really enjoyed it. You know, I feel like nothing is the same as the real thing, but given the circumstances, I think the University did the best that they could. The College of Nursing did the best that they could, and there was definitely things that I took away from those virtual platforms.

**CH**

When did you all go back to the in-person clinicals?

**CA**

I think it was, from what I remember, that fall. That was also just scary because, like I said, we were in the ICU. We weren't allowed to work with the COVID patients, but still just being in that environment was a little bit fearful for students.

**CH**

Was that the only clinical experience you had during COVID?

**CA**

No, I also had-- mental health came after that, so that's then going into senior year. I had mental health. I had community nursing, which was in a clinic in D.C. Mental health was at Howard University Hospital on their mental health unit. Then for senior practicum, I was placed in a postpartum mother-baby unit in Arundel Mills.

**CH**

Okay, and what was that like?

**CA**

I enjoyed that a lot. I really wanted NICU but because of just COVID, there were limited availabilities for what units we could be on and a limit for the number of students who could be on each unit. So, it was first come, first serve. I think the person who picked NICU before me was, like, five minutes before me. She beat me to it 'cause I was actually in clinical when they released the signup sheet. But they gave me postpartum so I was still able to work with the babies and the mothers and that was a really good experience.

**CH**

And NICU is what?

**CA**

Neonatal ICU.

**CH**

What would you like to pursue in your nursing career?

**CA 09:43**

I think that is it. There has been some back and forth with me between, like, Labor and Delivery and Neonatal ICU as well as pediatrics, but I think the more clinical experience that I was able to get, I was leaning more towards pediatrics. Maybe, like, neurosciences for pediatrics, because I work in

neurosciences now but with adults, so it's almost like a comfort thing, you know. You can mix that with the kids and then that would be something that I would like. Either that or the Neonatal ICU.

**CH**

What do you do in your current position in the neuro unit?

**CA**

In my current position-- So, my unit is what's called the Neuro IMC, which is intermediate care, so I stepped down from ICU. I worked since last summer as a student nurse extern and they allowed me to stay throughout the school year. So basically, we see a lot of brain surgeries, a lot of spinal surgeries, seizures, strokes, things of that nature, trauma to the head. Basically, they kind of let me be independent to a certain extent. I'm paired with a nurse, but that nurse allows me to take over one of their patients. So, I do everything from pass medications, assessments, plan of care, communicate with the physicians as well as other people in the interdisciplinary care team and, yeah, just do complete care of that person as well as charting.

**CH**

You actually have actual nursing duties as extern! How long is the extern assignment?

**CA**

So, the externship was only supposed to be two months. I think it was from, like, June to the end of July, but the unit really liked me and the help that I brought to the team so they allowed me to stay.

**CH**

That's a plus, right? A wonderful perk.

**CA**

Definitely.

**CH**

After that assignment is done and you apply for a job, is there any type of internship, nursing internship, or I think they call it a bridge program or anything? Is that what you'll enter into?

**CA**

Yes, so it'll be almost like school again but working towards that specific specialty under that hospital. So, from what I have seen, like you said, a bridge program basically just bridges that gap almost from textbook knowledge to putting it into real life for the people especially who haven't been fortunate enough to have an externship and gain the independence and the confidence that I have. So, still being paired with the nurse but learning all of the things that you need to know to be independent with your own patients.

**CH**

Do you have to pass the boards before you go into that program? How does it work?

**CA**

So, since I haven't applied full-time yet, I'm not completely sure, but from what I have heard and what I have seen, you do have to pass it by a certain time, but they will let you go in sometimes before you have passed it. Just, I mean, obviously, like everything, I think the pay difference or the independence depending upon you passing your NCLEX.

**CH**

How do you prepare for the NCLEX?

**CA**

So, Howard actually--

**CH**

This is Howard University?

**CA**

Yes, this is Howard University.

**CH**

In Washington D.C.

**CA**

In Washington, D.C. HBCU [both laugh].

**CH**

Their nursing program does some work with ATI, so we had a three-day nine-to-five almost like a training or refresher in everything in the upper division course of study. So, that would be med surg, pharmacology, maternity, mental health, and so on. So, we got test-taking tips there. We got a little bit of refresher of the most common, most popular drugs, different things like that. Body systems. We did that for three days and after that, we had a virtual ATI piece where we had an instructor on the software and ATI working with us virtually as we went back through all of these things a little bit more in detail. So, there were test-taking strategies in there as well, little concept maps that reminded you of certain things that were important, and then things for you to read before you would take an exam and remediate and move on to the next thing. So, I'm currently in the process of finishing that up. Then, from there, that's where they give you what's called the green light, basically saying that they feel you are ready to take your NCLEX, which is a licensure exam. I also have right now through UWorld, like, question banks, so I think it's about 1,000 questions or something like that that I've already pre-purchased, and so then I'll just open that up and try to do a certain amount of questions every day over the summer.

**CH**

When do you anticipate taking the NCLEX?

**CA**

I was thinking the end of July, and then starting to study next Monday. I was giving myself the weekend and through this week to kind of rest from the past five years [chuckles], and then I'll get back to it next week.



**CH**

Can you stop working during this time or?

**CA**

Yes, with final semester senior year, with senior practicum, which was me following this nurse, and postpartum full time, there really wasn't much time to work. Then, you know, with graduation and different things like that, I kind of figured I would focus on that and then once I started studying for my NCLEX, I can figure out my work schedule. I'm lucky that my job is very flexible and understanding that I have, you know, other things that are priorities. So, they kind of let me come and go, almost PRN, as I please.

**CH**

That, again, is a perk. You really left a wonderful impression with your employer there. What was it like for you having to work and go to school?

**CA 15:57**

I think that it taught me a lot of things, like responsibility. I mean, I've been working since I was in high school so that was really nothing new. So, I think that it taught me to be responsible, you know, to manage my finances. I was also paying rent at the time myself. So, just able to time manage and balance a lot of things at once, which is very, very necessary going into nursing when you're handling patients and different things like that. I think the downside is that it took a little bit away from my studies, and I was still able to graduate with a 3.4. I've always had high grades, thank you, but I feel that if school was my only responsibility, I would have been able to 100% focus on my studies. I think, too, my classmates who didn't have to work had a little bit-- I mean, I wouldn't say a better college experience, but I think they were able to just participate in things that sometimes I couldn't 'cause I had other places to be.

**CH**

They could smell more roses than you.

**CA**

Yeah, yes.

**CH**

You were still able to smell some roses, I hope.

**CA**

Yes, but I think the plus side of it is that my degree just means that much more to me because I had to work extremely hard to get it.

**CH**

Wonderful, wonderful. What type of jobs did you have?

**CA**

So, I've done babysitting through care.com, which basically matches you with families who need help in your area. That job lasted, I think, about three years, so I was able to see that little girl grow up and that's almost a part of my family. That's become some of my support system out here as well in D.C. I've done

just part-time jobs in the food industry and different things like that, and then my externship, which was the most relevant to what I want to do as far as work.

**CH**

You've lived on campus and off campus?

**CA**

So, my first year I stayed on campus in the dorms and then after that, just thinking about finances and different things like that, I felt that it would be better to move off campus and kind of save me a little bit of money. The place that I moved into, it was still affiliated with Howard University but it wasn't physically on campus. It was a furnished apartment, so I think that was a good transition into being on my own. I didn't have to worry about paying for furniture and different things like that, just bringing, you know, decorations and appliances, such as, like, my TV, my mini fridge. So, and then after that, for the next three years, I've been between, like, P.G. County, which is in Maryland, Montgomery County, which is where I stay at now, which is also in Maryland. So, just kind of bouncing around.

**CH**

Is it a better experience living off campus than on campus?

**CA**

Probably not [laughs], and that's, you know, one of the things-- I mean, I don't know that I would change it but again, just comparing my experience to my classmates, people who stayed closer to campus got a little bit more of the college life, where it almost seemed like, you know, I was commuting. So, that is that, but I do like the fact that I know a lot about the area, which a lot of my classmates only know Howard's campus or close to it. But I can, you know, find different places that I like in Maryland and Virginia, all types of places, so I would say that I'm very well-versed in the location.

**CH**

That sounds great. Chi Eta Phi Sorority Incorporated. How long have you been a member?

**CA** 19:44

I have been a member for three years, since spring 2019 when I joined on Howard University's campus.

**CH**

What chapter and region do you belong to?

**CA**

So, the Alpha Delta Beta Chapter is the chapter that is at Howard University. We were established in 1982, which came 50 years after the founding of the organization. That is located within the northeast region.

**CH**

Okay, and you're Alpha Delta Beta, and Beta means?

**CA**

Beta is the undergraduate chapter that falls under the graduate chapter.

**CH**

And which graduate chapter do you fall under?

**CA**

None other than Alpha chapter [laughs].

**CH**

[Cheers] The original chapter. What a history, what a history. What offices have you held on the local, regional, and national levels?

**CA**

So locally, I served as vice president my first year in the organization, which was 2019 to 2020, and then all throughout COVID, which was 2020 to now 2022, I served as president regionally. This past year, I served as a committee member for the Beta Coordination Committee, which just works very closely with the undergraduate members in the entire region and just ensuring that their experience within the sorority is up to par with their needs. I also serve nationally, now in my second year coming into, as the Third National Vice President. In this role, again, I serve as an advocate for the needs of the undergraduate members. I try to build strong relationships with them. I try to give them resources to help them get through nursing school and just overall mentorship.

**CH**

What are the needs of the Beta members?

**CA**

So, I would say from my conversations, definitely support academically, support financially, mentorship, as far as professionalism, as far as their personal lives. As most of our members are women, young women, I think there is a need there that they've stated just for people to be that role model and help them through some of these things that we know primarily Black women go through as they're coming of age, and service opportunities.

**CH**

What things do African American women coming of age go through?

**CA**

Definitely discrimination, whether it be our attitudes, the tones of our voice, just how we choose to carry ourselves. Whether it be hair, whether it be just how people expect us to behave. I don't even like to use that word 'behave', 'cause that doesn't sound humane, but just expect us to act, and kind of the facade that sometimes we're forced to put on to soften almost just our personalities to be able to fit into these spaces that are primarily white.

**CH**

Do you feel that there's a lot of discrimination and bias?

**CA**

I definitely do. Just personal experience that I have had, like I said, I did grow up in a suburban area and I've dealt with racism from a very young age. I do remember being called racial slurs as early as

elementary school, and that's stuff that obviously kids are not born with but they're taught. So, I think when it comes to how I'm able to navigate these primarily white spaces, it's a little bit easier for me because I was raised around people who operated in that manner. I think people who come from areas where they're the majority, it's a little bit different. It's a little bit difficult and it's new to them. So, just having those discussions about those tough things and just encouraging and motivating each other to keep going regardless.

**CH**

Have you found that the Betas nationally face this type of bias?

**CA**

Yes. Yes, I definitely think so, and I know for a fact, even just, I mean, unrelated to that bias, but other struggles like the pandemic, I think some people are a little worried just with the shortages, but I've heard that there's always a nursing shortage but, especially now, just the fear of coming in and having to work in certain conditions, having to work with patients who may be infected with COVID-19, the worry of being exposed to that and just all of these other stressors. I think there's a little bit of anxiety when it comes to that.

**CH**

What do you think the Betas need to help them feel more comfortable as students in pursuing a nursing career?

**CA** 25:04

I think that they are in the perfect spot now, which is being members of the organization, because they have people who have already been through this to kind of wrap their arms around them, take them under their wing and bring them up. I know that has been one of the biggest contributing factors to what I see as my success thus far and just my confidence in moving forward is the mentorship that I have gained through the organization. I think that they need to be open to having these types of conversations and just understanding that they're not alone, which is something that I definitely try to stress to them when I'm having these one-on-one conversations with them. So, just continuing to do that, continuing to be active in the organization and just understanding that this is a community almost. A community within a community is what I would consider our organization.

**CH**

As we are multi-generational, do you feel that you as the younger generation are accepted and embraced in the organization?

**CA**

I would definitely say so. Just, I mean, and I can only speak almost from my personal experience, but I will say that my graduate chapter, Alpha chapter, my mentors, Tijeerah Henderson and Diana Hines, they have really welcomed me with open arms, and I just owe so much of my development within nursing, within being a professional, a Black professional, a Black female professional at that, to this organization. I see nothing different when I speak to other undergraduate members. They have really good relationships with their graduate chapters, whether it be the entire chapter or whether it just be one person. Really, that's almost all that you need.

**CH**

That's great. That sounds great. Any aspirations as far as joining the graduate chapter and running for any other offices?

**CA**

Definitely. I just feel like my passion for the organization is so strong to the point where I don't see myself not ever being a member. I don't see myself not ever being active or a leader in the organization. So, the next step after this year, where I'm still considered a Beta member but I'm transitioning into being a registered nurse, is to join the graduate chapter, which is Alpha. I definitely have leadership aspirations on, honestly, all levels, so that would be locally, regionally as well as nationally.

**CH**

Will you still reach back to the Beta chapter to encourage them to continue in the organization?

**CA**

Yes. I think I'm a strong believer in pouring into others what was poured into you and so, even now, as I'm still around but still kind of seen as, like, this leader, although I am a novice, which is kind of very weird, I'm always offering just a sisterly conversation. I'm offering my nursing resources that I've used to get myself through nursing school, encouragement, all of those types of things. So, it's something that I would definitely keep going.

**CH**

And that is part of what we do in Chi Eta phi Sorority Incorporated is to share resources. I think that is a strong part of who we are as an organization. Any thoughts on the service projects that you all did?

**CA**

So, the Alpha Delta Beta chapter, I think we are most active in that sense when it comes to service, whether it be on our own or in collaboration with Alpha chapter. We also collaborate with other organizations. We have a Nursing Club on our campus. We have something called Health Connects on our campus. So, we do a lot of outreach in the DMV community. We don't just keep it localized to D.C. We also branch out into Maryland and sometimes Virginia. There is, unfortunately, a very large homeless population in the DMV, so we focus a little bit there. We focus a little bit on health care, women who are experiencing domestic violence, children who are experiencing homelessness and different things like that. There are also a lot of hospitals in the area, so we have done service projects where we write letters of encouragement, especially during COVID where we can't be so much face-to-face, but we've written letters of encouragement to children at Children's National Hospital here in D.C. We've done work with St. Jude, the March of Dimes, just a lot of great organizations.

**CH**

Any feedback on the impact that you all had when you were writing those letters to the children at Children's Hospital?

**CA**

Yes. They definitely said that they're very grateful for the fact that people are thinking about them, and it's been a little bit encouraging just to know that the work that we do is making a difference.

**CH 30:23**

Scholarship is a part of the pillars with Chi Eta Phi Sorority Incorporated and financing scholarships. Have you benefited from that?

**CA**

Oh absolutely [laughs]. So, just me having to do a fifth year, the scholarship that I mentioned earlier that I had to fight for with Howard was only four years. I believe that Howard is almost 50,000 a year, so let's just say 25,000 a semester, and working those part-time jobs that I mentioned was definitely not gonna be enough. So, I have applied for on the local, regional and national levels several scholarships and luckily been granted all of them for a total of a little bit over \$20,000.

**CH**

Congratulations. Now, that is for one year?

**CA**

So, that was over the course of about a year and a half, and all of it went directly to tuition and fees.

**CH**

And you financed the rest of your education with grants and loans?

**CA**

With federal loans a little bit, not very much, and then just working to cover what's left over.

**CH**

You did a great job to cover that at 50,000 a year. Any other benefits that you have gained from being in Chi Eta Phi?

**CA**

So, I've spoke on mentorship. Professionalism is definitely a big thing. I think that Howard does a great job of trying to teach that through organizations, but as far as it comes to nursing, that's a very specific field and I think that, through Chi Eta Phi, I've learned professionalism and bedside manner. Professionalism as far as interviews as well as just how you conduct yourself as a professional, 'cause I know that a lot of careers are, you know, occupations, but we're more so of a profession and there's a big difference in between the two. I would also say sisterhood, definitely. I have gained a lot of lifelong friends. As I said, this has been like my home away from home, and I don't know what my experience would be like without, sort of, that networking, this familial structure.

**CH**

So, the sisterhood is very important in the organization as well as, you mentioned, mentoring. What is your long-term goal as a nurse?

**CA**

So, my long-term goal is to take the advocacy that I have and that I want to provide past the bedside, and eventually I want to get into opening, like, nonprofit organizations, maybe free clinics, different things like that that benefit the population that is at need as far as healthcare.

**CH**

What's next for you in education?

**CA**

Education-wise, definitely I think a master's. I want to work a little bit, you know, get a little bit of experience in my field and then, you know, continuing education, as is another pillar of Chi Eta Phi, so a master's. Eventually, either a PhD or a DNP, and just continue to go higher.

**CH**

What path are you gonna follow with your education?

**CA**

So, it will either be neonatal care, so that would be a neonatal nurse practitioner or a women's health nurse practitioner. I'm still kind of on the fence between the two, but all of it has to do with my passion for maternal and child health.

**CH**

What created that passion for you?

**CA** 34:23

I think just as one of the many things that are plaguing the minority populations, just the fact that Black women are, like, exponentially more likely to die during childbirth than their white counterparts. I think learning about that coming through high school and just seeing it, honestly, firsthand. A lot of times in a hospital, I sometimes unfortunately noticed that, you know, the Black patients are-- their pain is almost not perceived as what they're stating it to be, as opposed to some of the white patients. So, I think that is a big part in why I want to do what I want to do.

**CH**

So that you can advocate for them and hear their voices. Advocacy. I heard you speak about that. Do you feel that's a big component in being a professional nurse?

**CA**

Yes. I honestly think that that's the biggest component because, as a nurse, you're the person who spends the most time with the patient, so you really are blessed with the opportunity to get to know them. So, the slightest difference, although on paper may not look like that much to a physician, because you have that personal, you know, that personal relationship with them, you can voice when they can't for themselves how serious that little bit of change might be.

**CH**

Any words for someone considering going into nursing as a profession?

**CA**

Absolutely do it [both laugh]. The journey will be difficult but it's absolutely possible, I will say, and I think it's just a rewarding profession overall. There are so many different opportunities to change what you want to do within nursing. You're never stuck to a specialty. You're never stuck to being bedside. There's just so many different branches that you can go into, whether it's education within nursing,

whether it's traveling, working with children, the elderly, every single scope possible, you have the opportunity to work in.

**CH**

That is a plus. You have some wiggle room there. Do you feel that Chi Eta Phi Sorority makes a difference in service for humanity?

**CA**

I definitely do, and I have seen it firsthand, just the fact that we're so out there, really, with the community. You know, some people say that they're about service and different things like that, but with us you can actually see it. You physically see the impact. We're physically out there, boots on the ground in the community making the difference.

**CH**

Any other advice for a novice nurse?

**CA**

I would say, find a mentor. Find someone who has been through it already, whether that be through Chi Eta Phi, shameless plug, [both laugh] or whether that just be, you know, someone that you see in the hospital that you're working with, but you'll definitely need somebody to help bring you along. I know they say nurses eat their young [laughs] but that's not always the case. There's always somebody out there who's willing to help you. So, for every "no" you get, trust me, there's, like, a million more "yes's". You just have to find that person.

**CH**

That's a wonderful, wonderful inspiration for somebody out there. Any notes or ideas about making your nurse educational journey more palliative?

**CA**

So, I would say definitely just study as much as you can. Try, like I said, try to get affiliated with organizations that can help you, that can provide you resources, and just keep going. Honestly, I mean, I think once you get started it becomes very realistic, like, once you actually get into it. I think it's more hard to just sit back and think about it and plan and plan and conceptualize, as opposed to just starting. Then, once you start, you just keep going. Take it day-by-day, every step at a time, and then just put yourself out there.

**CH**

Social life. Talk about social life.

**CA** 38:57

What social life? [both laugh] Yeah, I think that that is something that sometimes has to be sacrificed to get to where you want to go, but I will say, through Chi Eta Phi, that kind of became my social life because they were very easy to have social bonds with people in that sense, because we're all interested in the same thing.



**CH**

Were you able to have any social life at all?

**CA**

Yeah, I mean, I would say so. I think there was a time and a place, you know. Like, obviously if you have a big exam coming up, then maybe going out is not the best thing to do. I'm sure freshman year that probably was one of the decisions that I made and then regretted it, but as you grow a little bit older and you mature, you learn from certain mistakes like that. So, I would say so. Definitely the summer if you're not in an externship. I took advantage of being able to socialize and have my fun then as well as on breaks. So, there's time for it, but a lot less as opposed to other majors.

**CH**

So, do you think that work-life balance, work-study-life balance, is important?

**CA**

100%, and those are skills that you absolutely need for the profession. There is going to be-- you have your assignment, which may be a lot of different patients with a lot of different needs, and you have to figure out what's priority for the day. You have to go through your day like that. Complete your tasks, cluster your care, which means when you're in the room, take everything in the room that you need for that particular task and more, so that way, you're not in and out wasting time that way. So, I think that I've been able to learn how to balance all of that, which will help me when I become a nurse on my own.

**CH**

Self-care. Is it important?

**CA**

Yes. It's important because you cannot help other people when you're not right yourself. So, you have to find mainly just the things that you can do that will actually make a difference. So for me, it was nature. Like, I really enjoy nature. I like walks in nature, hikes, going to different lakes, just sightseeing, sitting there journaling, things like that. That's something that I did for self-care, as well as, you know, a good show every now and then never hurts.

**CH**

What kind of show?

**CA**

I like crime documentaries and different things like that. I like medical shows, actually. Comedies. So, those were my forms of self-care.

**CH**

Self-care definitely is important, and you made a very profound statement that you can't take care of others if you don't take care of yourself. So, I'm just going to say to you, make sure you take a break when you're on duty and go to the bathroom [laughs].

**CA**

Yes, that is true. Go to the bathroom, hydrate.

**CH**

That's it. You have to. You have to so that you can keep going. Any words of wisdom and your thoughts about our beloved Chi Eta Phi Sorority Incorporated?

**CA**

Words of wisdom for current members are you saying? Okay, well, I will say, for current members, especially undergraduates, know that no goal is too big to achieve. Like, our national president was one day a new member just as we are, so never feel like what you have to bring to the table is not important. I know that I had a little bit of impostor syndrome just as I was appointed Third National Vice President, being the only undergraduate on the board. I was preparing for our first board meeting and I was like, "Oh my gosh. What have I gotten myself into?" Like, "Who do I think I am being able to sit in a room with all of these women who are just so impactful, who have 30 plus years of nursing under their belts and here I am still in school?" Like, "What good am I?" I know just personally, it was really nice to hear our national president, Dr. Sarah Killian, say to me in that first board meeting that she really needed me because I am the person who is most in touch, the person who can relate to the undergraduate members. So, just know that you bring your own set of skills. You bring your own worth and your own qualities to every situation, whether it be the organization or nursing in general, and just move and operate in that excellence.

**CH**

I just want to go back to being in the undergraduate chapter for membership. Do you have to be invited to become a member?

**CA**

So, membership is by invitation only in our organization, but I think the more that you put yourself out there and talk to current members, the more that you, you know, you show your face at events and you come and you help out with community service, that allows a space to get to know the members in the organization to where they will want to invite you to become a member.

**CH**

Was that time period when you were going through the process of becoming a member rigorous? Was it very time consuming?

**CA**

It was time consuming. It was time consuming in the sense of there was information that needed to be learned. I kind of did a little bit of prep work before so that it wasn't so daunting when the time came, just expecting what is to come. So, I think that it definitely reinforced the organization-work-life-school balance, but it's something that also prepared me, once again, for nursing as a career.

**CH**

So, what are your plans between now and NCLEX?

**CA**

Between now and NCLEX, studying, obviously, a lot, applying for full time jobs in the Neonatal ICU and Labor and Delivery, maybe postpartum, different things like that, so there will be interviews. Catching up, now that I have a little bit more free time since I'm not in school, on some of my goals and

plans as the National Vice President for the undergraduate members. I have to move into a new apartment, so it's going to be a very busy summer for me, but it feels good.

**CH**

Well, congratulations again and the best of luck. I see you are already an impactful nurse leader, so keep going. The sky is not the limit, so just keep going. Congratulations again. I thank you so much, again, for agreeing to take time out of your celebration time here to meet with me to complete this interview in this important time in history.

**CA**

Thank you for having me.

**CH**

Okay. Thank you.

46:12

End of recording