

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:11:12 - 00:00:41:27

Hi, guys. Welcome back to College Bound. We're here with our third episode of this season all about being Asian-American at Notre Dame. My name is Hailey, I'm one of the interns on the team and I'm a senior here at Notre Dame, majoring in American Studies and Sociology, living in Pasquerilla West Hall. I'm here today with a special guest for our next episode about the Asian/Asian-American experience at Notre Dame. So here we have C.J. Foronda with us.

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C.J. Do you want to introduce yourself?

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Hi, my name's C.J. Foronda. I'm from Chicago. I lived in Lewis but now I'm off campus and I'm a senior majoring in Political Science and History.

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So first, I just want to start out and ask about kind of your experience choosing Notre Dame. What did you expect with Notre Dame being a PWI?

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So I grew up in the city of Chicago, but I went to high school in the suburbs, so that was also a predominantly white community, so Notre Dame, being of a similar demographic makeup didn't really throw me off and I got the opportunity to visit campus for spring visit. I felt that gave me a good insight as to what the school had to offer, as well as the type of community that I would have here as a non-white student, so I think going into it, I wasn't really worried or anything like that, but I definitely think any issues that I had with that or troubles kind of came when I actually arrived to campus. It was interesting, like the discrepancy between what was shown, and the experience that I had when I showed up to campus.

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Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit more about your academic and social experience here being a Filipino student?

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I had really great luck finding a group of friends that I really love and I wouldn't trade them for the world. I think they're amazing. I think a big part of that is the resources that I had on campus. I love being a Balfour Scholar on campus, so I got to do a program the summer before I started freshman year and kind of got to be with a group of other non-white students that really got me acquainted and kind of helped me establish a social circle before I got thrown in the bigger pond. Once I got to campus as well, I got to go on Asian Retreat and talk to people through that and just make friends through the dorms.

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I think the the overall spirit of Notre Dame is one that's very open regardless of who people are. You know, even if people are inadvertently maybe a little biased, I feel like it's never malicious; it's just kind of from a lack of education. Everyone was really open in that respect, and I feel like you can just find

your group of people. It's a big enough school that you'll find your place as long as you put yourself out there and kind of be yourself.

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In terms of academics, I think the biggest adjustment going from like a predominantly white high school to Notre Dame was just like, like I said, my high school was mostly white students, but that ratio is so much more severe at Notre Dame. There were a lot of East Asians at my high school, so there would be a lot of them in my classes, so there would always be another person of color in the room with me. That was just a nice grounding thing to have in all of my classes. But here at Notre Dame, I found that it's a lot more common that I'm the only person of color in my classes at all, which was definitely an adjustment.

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Being in the majors that I am, with political science and history, we obviously talk about a lot of social issues and try and have constructive conversations about that, and I think the perspective that comes from being not only Asian or Filipino, but being a person of color period, or like a woman, is something that is that might be a little less represented in a classroom here than I would have expected, given how large the school is.

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So are there any communities or resources that you've really found helpful during your time here, especially dealing with some of these experiences?

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Yeah, I think the biggest thing for me, and it's not like a formal resource, but just having relationships and friendships with other Asian students and other students of color, that if you do find yourself in a situation where you might feel a little uncomfortable or a little ostracized that you can talk those over with peers that have had those experiences as well and kind of can relate to what you're going through. Like I said, being able to meet those people and make those connections through the Balfour program through the Asian-American Student Association, and through dorm life has just been really great.

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And then I think there are resources like MSPS, here's the UCC that I haven't really maybe taken advantage of them fully during my time here, but I know people that have, and if you need those, it's really comforting to know that they're available.

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Do you have a piece of advice or maybe some words of wisdom to prospective Asian-American students who are considering going to Notre Dame?

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At least for me, growing up in Chicago, and I know, like a lot of Asian students that I've met here come from places like California and Hawaii, where there is a large proportion of students that look like them, and it just kind of be prepared for the culture shock that might come with being in an environment where you have to seek those people out as opposed to them being right there for you, but I think that as long as you're being proactive and you really prioritize making those bonds with other Asian students or other students of color, that Notre Dame is as good a place as any to find those people and make those connections and to just be open to the experiences here.

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Since you're a senior and you've been here for four years, what do you feel that your ND experience has given you or taught you?

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Obviously in college, you're supposed to learn a lot, so I've done that both academically and personally, but I think the difference in me personally is so palpable. I think that if I met senior year me today, it's like night and day. The culture here, where everyone is so open and you're given opportunities to explore and find what you're really passionate about, is something that I think is really special about Notre Dame, and something that I really appreciate.

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Thanks so much for sharing your story with us today, and I hope you enjoy the rest of your senior year!