

John Boccacino:

Hello and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Ruchatneet Printup:

on as far as overcoming adversity because you're a first-generation college student in your family, the first to go away, you grew up outside of Buffalo on native lands on a reservation. Did you grow up thinking that college was even something that would be an option for you given the hardworking nature of your family and the blue-collar jobs that your dad and your family held?

Ruchatneet Printup:

I did well as a student. I started off at the Tusker Nation School. I was born and raised in Tuscarora. I really didn't know a lot of non-native people until I was going into sixth grade when you're around 12 years old. So, the first six years of my elementary school experience was going to an all-native elementary school in my community. So, you don't get exposed to a lot of non-natives, just maybe some of your teachers, my parents didn't have... Most of the people they hung out with were family, our community members. And because I had done reasonably well in school... When I look back, it just seemed like a natural progression to go to college. But I didn't realize at that time there were two things I didn't realize, and one was how impactful that can be to go away to school, not having... I mean, my mom did a little bit of community college, but she had, it's just a lot of kids and it just didn't work out for her.

But it does profoundly change you and the other thing I didn't realize is how much it would change me at that time. I was kind of naive about that, but it kind of taught me a couple different things. When I kind of finished my time at RIT was that if you don't have a strong identity yourself, then college will try to create that for you. And I don't know that it's intentional, but it's just kind of what happens in that environment is they're kind of molding you. And RIT was very much a career-oriented kind of school. And when I got out of school, I knew that I didn't love what I was doing, and it didn't take me long to realize that the money going to wasn't going to fulfill me. And it was a good lesson for me because when you're a first-generation college student and my father being an iron worker, they make good money when they're working.

But my dad had gotten hurt a few times and so we went through stretches where we struggled. And so, you feel like money is going to somehow fill that void, especially when you've experienced struggle at times in your family. But it was a good lesson for me to learn because even when I made good money, it didn't fill that void for me. And so, I didn't spend the rest of my life kind of looking for that job that was going to give me the money because I'm more focused on what would be more fulfilling for me at that point. And so, it was kind of a process of self-discovery through my life to figure that out.

John Boccacino:

All students of all ages, not just a non-traditional student like yourself. It's easy to think what you want to do. And the field that you had gone into at RIT where you got your degree was one that seemed to have viability as a career, your traditional safer programs. I think you would agree it wasn't something that you felt you could get a career afterwards and make some money, but that wasn't satisfying for you. You did mention having an interest in film and even from growing up watching TV and movies. I know TV didn't play a large role in your life, but can you describe a little bit when you first got the bug for film and for movies and was there a movie that really stood out to you that it sparked your interest in this realm.

Ruchatneet Printup:

Growing up in a family, my mom was a teenage mom by the time she was 20, she had three boys and then my sisters were born in her later 20s. So, my two sisters were born when I was 10 and 11 years old. So, weren't a family that went to the movies, just weren't taking five kids to the movies for recreation.

Our recreation was playing outside, just being in the neighborhood. But I started work at a young age. I was 14 when I start working and by the time, I was 16 I was able to afford a car. I actually bought my first car before I turned 16, a couple of months before. So, as soon as I turned 16 and I had money, I started to go to a lot of movies, me and my younger brother especially. And we would go to the movies





skills and there's always room for improvement, but I've learned the skills to be able to do that, and be able to fill in the holes if I don't have a certain person as a part of that crew.

John Boccacino:

And how tough was it when we talk about your career going from RIT you work, you hold a job with a nonprofit for more than 20 years, getting involved back with your community. You even were driving a truck for The Buffalo News for a while that tell us about that story with the news and truck driving and how that may be made Syracuse more of a realization.

Ruchatneet Printup:

Well, like you said, I worked in the nonprofit field for 20 years or so and just worked with all different groups of people from students in high school I worked with elders, I worked with prison programs, people with mental health, developmental disabilities. But as I developed through, it was really my more my passion to work in culture and language as it evolved through. And then I did that for a number of years and developed programs in that area. And then I just started to feel like I needed a shift. I was really feeling like I needed to do something different. I wasn't being fulfilled in the same way, and it was just time for a shift. And I left working in nonprofits and a friend of mine was actually working for The Buffalo News and he said they're always looking for people to work and drive.

And so, I got a job with The Buffalo News as a driver. And because I had education, people just assumed I was writing for The Buffalo News, but I'd actually gotten my CDL through The Buffalo News driving. And what really helped me about truck driving was I knew that I was looking for something different. I didn't look at truck driving really as what I was going to do, but it was a union job, it paid well. And it was interesting when I got my CDL, I felt like my dad was more proud of my CDL license than any schooling that I had gotten, which is interesting, which may not be true, but he was excited about me getting my CDL license. So, I was working and part of the reason I was driving was because I could listen to podcasts, I could listen to kind of things that just stimulate my mind to think about expanding myself.

And I was really searching for what my next move would be. And I've done a fair amount of meditation since I was in my 20s and I was meditating, and it just came to me. It said you could go to Syracuse University and be a film director, and it just instantly, it was like a bell went off. It just felt right from that moment. And I didn't know if I could get into Syracuse. Syracuse is a top 20 film school in the country and it's very competitive to get into Syracuse's program. And so, I didn't know if I was going to get in, but I still felt like I was probably going to pursue it whether I got into Syracuse or not. But I just felt going back to Syracuse would fast-forward me learning more about the film, craft of filmmaking, and just the business of filmmaking.

And I applied to Syracuse, and I applied as a transfer

Ruchatneet Printup:

There were so many adjustments, I guess because I've always challenged myself with different jobs that I do





senior thesis, but she was in England at the time. So, I couldn't draw on her for her help in that area, but I would've loved to had her on set.

John Boccacino:

Well, it's great that she'll get a chance to see you walk across the stage. Your decorated career at Syracuse includes being VPA Scholar, being a Haudenosaunee Promise Scholar, a source scholar, you studied an SU in Los Angeles, you're delivering the convocation speech. It's going